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SCRUTINY

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CULTURE AND EARLY ENVIRONMENT

THE *Fantasia of the Unconscious* is by no means the last word on education, but it seems to me the best single book on the subject published since the War. In this essay I shall touch on the problem of how views like Lawrence's affect the everyday practice of education. A certain amount of material is included which might appear more in place in one of the technical journals, but the inclusion is justified, I think, if the argument that is put forward is accepted—that the general handling of children, including young children, has an important bearing on the cultural questions *Scrutiny* has set itself to discuss, and on the present cultural situation as a whole.

That situation has often been described. Survival goes to the fittest, the fittest, generally, to make money. Novelists, film-producers, journalists, wireless ' turns,' commercial designers, most of these prosper not according to their sense of responsibility and their artistic ability, but according to their power to attract money. Exactly the influences which should be forming public taste are being used chiefly to exploit it. And since one penny is as good as another, the voice, or at any rate the acquiescence, of the people is the voice of God, in ways that have little to do with the polling-booth. Arrogant gangster films, not even translated, draw crowds on the Continent ; advertisers out-do one another in the vulgarity of their appeals ; spoon-feeding journals shoulder the *Week-End Review* of the bookstalls. Much of this degrading scramble is a consequence of competition and may cease with political changes ; the Russian films we have seen, for all the naïvety of their machine-worship and their other defects, call for a far greater respect than those of any other country, and the B.B.C. is certainly one better than Fécamp. But majority rule in this wider sense, however it may be manipulated and whatever the political changes we may expect, will stay. It may be that we were wrong from the start, and, as Lawrence believed, that there is no remedy for

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our plight short of a closing-down of the schools and a return to illiteracy. We trust he was mistaken. Popular literacy is only one feature, hardly more than a symptom, of what has happened and is happening. A return to vitality of impulse by the path he suggests would obviously mean the abandonment of most of the gains as well as the losses of recent centuries ; and, as he knew, so drastic a reversal is unlikely or impossible. We can go forward or do nothing. The people will have to cope with ideas of sorts, and the appeal will always be to them. That is the situation an educational system has to meet. We are forced to ask whether the most popular need always be the most vulgar appeals—to fear, hate, inferiority feelings, snobbery, negative herd feelings, phantasy-living, etc.—and whether circumstances, including education, could be altered to end or reduce the efficacy of the present appeals ; and, positively, what sort of enjoyment can replace the present shoddy pleasures. Moreover, since what most will accept determines largely what all must endure, a system which will solve these problems for a minority only has a very limited usefulness. There are other educational problems, of course, but these are central and the most pressing ; they seem to me, therefore, to provide a reasonable approach towards Mr. Shelton's book,[1] which propounds, as its subject, the question ' What cultural training is best adapted to modern conditions? '

It is so immediately obvious, unfortunately, that the book has no conscious criticism to offer, that interest in the subject-matter of the book quickly gives way to a morbid interest in the author, as a product of English education and an influence in it. Beyond the need for a few minor tinkerings, like the separation of S.C. from Matric., Mr. Sheldon finds no fault with the present system. ' I have never heard complaints about the religious instruction . . . We have formed a very reasonable working compromise, and there it can very well be left.' He gives a dreary account of the school as a place where ' a laugh is tolerated if there is any reasonable excuse ' ; of the children deriding the teachers, the teachers ' mildly disliking ' each other and competing

[1] *Thoughts of a Schoolmaster, or Common Sense in Education*, by H. S. Shelton, Hutchinson, 6/-.

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for exam. results, the men on a mixed staff disliking the women, and the Head hated by all ; and of discipline maintained through the reserve threat of a bad reference and consequent unemployment. This may be an inaccurate account, but it is given from inside, by an admirer. The reader will be depressed or amused ; Mr. Shelton is able to offer it with solemn content since his values were moulded by the system itself. Worldly success is his only criterion. Arnold Bennett, we are astonished to read, could afford contempt for the intellectual standards of the average man because he had won himself an adequate income, whereas the underpaid teacher must forego such luxuries. ' It seems to me desirable to abolish school prizes only when, in after life, good work and ability bring more rewards than bad work and mediocrity.' There is a shuddering reference to companionate marriage. The book, in short, is a useful demonstration of the insufficiency of common sense and goodwill.

Beyond a little self-righteous debunking of the Arnold nonsense, there is nothing bellicose about Mr. Shelton's common sense. He has not the lowbrow's uneasy hostility towards serious standards for the good reason that he is unaware of them. His defects are negative, those of an all-embracing unawareness. He is unaware of the problems a modern education has to face, of radical objections to the prevailing education and morality, of the insufficiency of science ; unaware, worst of all, of his unawareness. He has a chapter headed ' The Academic Bias of School Work,' which discusses, not the assertion ' The great mass of humanity should never learn to read and write—never,' but minor adjustments of syllabus. His chapter on co-education describes, chiefly, a mixed school in the 'nineties, in which the scared precautions of the staff must have been a constant reminder to the children of the possibilities. (If it provokes reflection that half-measures in co-education are worse than none, it will serve a purpose). But the inadequacies of the book in themselves are of less importance than their cause ; that is, mainly, an emotional sterility in the author which limits his awareness to what can be directly perceived by the intellect. We cannot say that this is due to a scientific training, nor that with a literary education it would have been otherwise ; merely, that a thorough scientific training is compatible with, and all too often accompanied by,

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such a limitation, and that one aim of a literary education would be to prevent it.

It is of no account that Mr. Shelton himself advocates an education half literary, half scientific, for by the word 'literature' he refers to what is associated with the name of Mr. S. P. B. Mais, which is unlikely to increase the area or the sharpness of perception. What is probably more to the point is his notion of the fundamental educational process, advocated in his rôle of master, but acquired, it is plain, in the earlier rôle of pupil. Education he conceives of as fundamentally the breaking-in of primitive instincts ; the analogy with breaking-in ponies is explicitly used. Machine-hand, admittedly are in something of the same position as pit-ponies, but the production of them is not a main aim of education. Mr. Shelton makes the undiscussed assumption that a child's will is necessarily against the educational process. This is not so except in an education for machine-tending ; but punishment in such a case becomes necessary, and the whole process, being largely mechanical, can be carried through on any scale. Here, I think, we have a clue to one cause of the sterility we regret in Mr. Shelton. It is not merely the direct damage punishments do, but the rigidity of handling which they reflect and cause, and the difficulty or impossibility of intimate understanding for which they are responsible. They mean a constant frustration of creative energy, which seems in practice to assume open or disguised forms of hate. Punishments, like examinations, never yet solved any important problem ; they merely dodge problems and render them in reality a great deal more acute. An incident in Mr. Shelton's book may serve to illustrate the point. It concerns a boy who committed a trivial offence in order to be punished. 'A master came along and gave him two hundred lines. He went to the master next day and explained that he had a lot to do at the time, and did not want to do the lines, could he be caned instead? His wish was granted, and I understand that he was satisfied.' It is hard to see that punishment here solved even the immediate problem of conduct—it seems rather to have created it. But that is a minor point. It requires no great powers of insight to wonder whether the boy was moved by masochism and whether the punishment was likely to encourage masochism. Without further evidence these remain mere possibilities, but they are

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possibilities which, if Dr. Glover is right in finding the main *raison d'être* of war in the sanctioned outlet it provides for secret masochism and sadism, are both important and urgent. They are possibilities altogether too fine for the punishment economy. Mr. Shelton sees the incident from such a distance that to him it constitutes just an unusually cogent argument for punishments. One may reject Dr. Glover's thesis, but it seems unwise to ignore it thus.

The most vigorous protest against the deadening indifference of our educational machine is the *Fantasia* ; but Lawrence was not himself engaged in the business of teaching, and moreover some of his proposals are unhelpfully drastic. It is interesting to compare his views with those of a teacher who has made an admirably courageous attempt to carry into practice radical educational reforms, Mr. A. S. Neill.[1] Here are several important though not entirely representative quotations from the *Fantasia*:

> ' The fact is, our process of universal education is today so uncouth, so psychologically barbaric, that it is the most terrible menace to the existence of our race. We seize hold of our children, and by parrot-compulsion we force into them a set of mental tricks. By unnatural and unhealthy compulsion we force them into a certain amount of cerebral activity.'
>
> ' Teach [the child] songs, tell it tales. But *never* instruct it school-wise. And mostly, leave it alone, send it away to be with other children and to get in and out of mischief, and in and out of danger.'
>
> ' Morality which is based on ideas, or an ideal, is an unmitigated evil. A child which is proud and free in its movements, in all its deportment, will be quite as moral as need be.'
>
> ' I may have ideals if I like—even of love and forbearance and meekness. But I have no right to ask another to have these ideals. And to impose *any ideals* upon a child as it grows is almost criminal. It results in impoverishment and distortion and subsequent deficiency.'

The virility of this is purely Lawrence's, and in so far as

[1] *The Problem Child* and *The Problem Parent*, by A. S. Neill, Herbert Jenkins, 5/-.

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his inspiration rather than his guidance is thought to matter, the virility is the essential. But they imply also certain definite and separable imperatives, with all of which, I think, Mr. Neill would concur. Mr. Neill of course is working and thinking on a much lower plane, and I think that an account of his opinions must be prefaced with a recognition of his defects, for two reasons: because they are so quickly apparent as to discourage many people from reading his books, and because they exemplify the faults most likely to be encouraged in the conditions he advocates. They are faults, in the main, of crude thinking and feeling. He misunderstands the case he is attacking, and his criticisms are therefore always a little beside the point. He generalizes rashly. His lowbrowism is rather too convenient. He finds O. Henry the most lovable of all writers, and allows himself in his own writing gross indulgences. The suspicion inevitably arises that Mr. Neill is reacting no less crudely against crude misinterpretations of more usual doctrines. This is true enough ; but it is the debased versions which are in fact most in evidence—the P.N.E.U., for example, has control of countless schools including all the elementary schools of Gloucestershire. Serious as are the faults we have described, they are not without their advantages. If Mr. Neill were more clearly aware of the difficulties of education, it may be doubted whether he would have started on so radical and valuable an experiment as his school. Much of his work there has been with difficult children, and has effected some spectacular cures. Indeed, I think it is fair to say, although Mr. Neill disagrees, that his work is essentially curative and the aim of his books preventive, rather than educational. None the less, it suggests conclusions of the greatest value in the education of normal children.

It is not possible to state Mr. Neill's views fairly in the space I can afford. Briefly, his fundamental difference with Mr. Shelton is in believing that the child's will is naturally, or originally, on the side of education. Malevolence, he believes, is not innate, but is the expression of frustrated good-will, of creative energy denied an outlet. And the frustration, he has come to believe, is usually due to parents and teachers who, with the best of conscious intentions, force their will on the child. Their unconscious motives he believes to be a good deal less innocent—self-assertion,

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possessiveness, jealousy, etc., and especially vicarious idealism due to an unconscious conviction of guilt. Whatever the motives, the compulsion results sometimes in 'problem' children, whose problem conduct, he has found, can often be cured simply by the removal of external compulsion. He concludes that children develop best when left to themselves, with adult help only when they choose to ask for it. These views he has tested out in a school governed by a school council, at which the children decide all questions of policy—the number (or existence) of lessons, bed-time arrangements, remedies for window-breaking, and similar matters. This environment, Mr. Neill claims, is the best for normal as well as for problem children ; with normal children in normal schools, the energy frustrated by compulsion is sufficiently under control not to lead to thieving, incendiarism, homicidal attempts, or other patently unsocial acts, but leads to a higher or lower degree of internal conflict, unnecessary inhibition, and dangerous (because generalized) unconscious hate.

We have every reason to respect the suitability of these views to the kind of work Mr. Neill has specialized in, the curing of extreme cases ; and it is unfortunately true that there are very few children whose education does not need to be partly curative ; but the views, as basis for a general educational method, are plainly insufficient. As a matter of educational technique, it is often expedient to recommend to a particular child O. Henry or Galsworthy instead of, say, Henry James ; but it is by no means a matter of indifference which they will come *eventually* to enjoy. At Mr. Neill's school the distinction seems to be minimized or ignored ; it seems likely that the children there would have the greatest difficulty in overcoming the same faults of crude thinking and feeling shown by Mr. Neill. Therefore, although the simplifications and over-statements present in Mr. Neill's writings may add to their force as propaganda, the influence these are likely to have will depend on a critical acceptance.

The value of Mr. Neill's work seems to me to be due to three merits, so closely connected as to be difficult to discuss separately: his recognition of the need for extreme intimacy of understanding and flexibility in education ; his recognition that education is concerned with the whole of the personality ; and his genuine concern for individuality. These phrases, of course,

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are the commonplace of pedagogic small-talk, but in most such talk they express pure verbalism. The teaching of children in droves of sixty, forty, or even twenty, the arbitrary punishments which compel a child to hide his true reactions, the growth of schools of anything up to a thousand pupils, the elaborate set time-tables, the drizzle of religiose and moral suggestion, the whole idea of independent-subject teaching, to all of which nine teachers in ten seem to be quite cheerfully resigned, cannot be reconciled with any understanding of the phrases.

To take the last point first, Mr. Neill's regard for individuality is something very different from the sickening lip-service of Mr. Shelton and others. On this point he has the courage to go as far as his convictions will take him. But he simplifies, and under-estimates greatly the difficulty of integrity. Children need and welcome some degree of imposed stability. To leave the whole initiative to them is as much an evasion of the fundamental problem as to leave none at all to them ; it amounts pretty much to expecting them to do in a few years what has taken the race many times the number of centuries. But it is superfluous to insist once again in these pages on the importance of individuality as the main goal of education.

In the second place, Mr. Neill is concerned in a thoroughly practical way to develop the whole personality of his pupils. Most teachers seek to do this in a way very different from his, by trying to develop each ' side ' of ' the child ' simultaneously. The metaphor is dangerous and misleading ; a child hasn't an indefinite number of sides, any one of which can be bulged a little at any time. Yet I do not know on what other assumption the time-table of practically every school in the country could be justified. A little progress is coaxed out of him by one specialist in this subject, and by another in that, regardless of the fact, of which no one is likely to be aware, that at the moment he has little attention for anything but murdering his brother in phantasy ; or that he is so elated by a sudden ' loosening ' in his pastel-work as to have an eye for nothing but forms and colours. Children have, it is true, a sturdy mental constitution, but it remains true that an otherwise irreproachable education which is not governed in relation to the general emotional as well as intellectual growth of the particular child, and which is not based on the recognition that

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genuine cultural development is a continuous building-up of the personality *as a whole* throughout life, is likely to lead only to an unnecessarily restricted kind of culture in the end. It is a matter of common observation that a high degree of artistic discrimination can go along with an extreme paucity or imbalance of general emotional life ; that what looks like culture from outside may be in fact only a more subtle evasion of private problems. ' Bad taste and crude responses,' as Dr. Richards declares, ' are not mere flaws in an otherwise admirable person. They are actually a root evil from which other defects follow.' Good taste and refined responses, unfortunately, do not invariably affect more than a layer or two of the personality. Thus a reader thoroughly proof against novels that seek to ingratiate themselves through reassuring him of his superiority, may get an essentially similar pleasure from his immunity ; culture, in a limited sense, can be the instrument of self-interest. For, where there is some deep emotional dissatisfaction, it is much easier to perceive and suppress the symptoms, the particular undesirable actions that express it, than the cause itself ; and when one outlet is denied, another equally but not so visibly undesirable is usually found. A minority of adults can deal with such a situation, but for most it is too late ; the problem goes back to childhood, sometimes to very early childhood. Disinterestedness is more likely to be achieved by the living-out of important interests as they occur than by their suppression ; every arbitrary and resented prohibition in youth detracts from the amount of the future personality which can take part in an effective culture. It seems to me, therefore, that such questions as the punishment of infantile masturbation are by no means irrelevant or even peripheral to the problems of cultural training ; rather, they are preliminary or conditional to such training.

Finally, the need for intimate understanding and flexibility of method. It would seem trite and yet it is necessary to insist that these are the key necessities. Ultimately the worth of a school must depend on the quality of its staff, and the value of its system lies in the scope it gives to their intelligence. There can be no substitute for intelligence, but intelligence can be dissipated or economized. It can only apply itself to the real problems, I think, where there is such understanding and flexibility. For

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problems which at first approach seem identical may need in fact quite opposite solutions. Thus an enthusiasm for arithmetic may be, in one child, the beginning of a genuine interest in mathematics ; in another, it may be a seeking for a temporarily needed sense of achievement ; in a third, a refuge from emotional problems. Stealing, again, may be best treated by being ignored, or by argument and discussion, or by a show of affection, or by retaliation ; or it may be a symbolical stealing of information or love and call for psychiatric treatment. Instances in practice are usually more complex, but these may serve to illustrate the assertion that education from a distance, as we saw it described by Mr. Shelton, is a matter of hit or miss, with a certainty of frequent misses. And no child is going to allow intimacy to punishing authority. The power to punish is a strong inducement to any teacher to put his head in the sand. Purely personal exasperation and retaliation is a very different matter. ' But know all the time what you are doing, and always be responsible for your anger. Never be ashamed of it, and never suppress it.' Very very few teachers or parents can observe this caution ; where there must be a rule of thumb, the safest is ' No punishments whatever.' It is the moral element in punishments which sets up the worst conflict ; and putting children on their honour is criminal, an attempt to enlist their self-respect against their impulses. A child's only protection against such bullying is the undesirable one of learning to conspire against authority. Whether he yields or rebels, there is bound to be an impoverishment, a diminution of his capacity for satisfactory living. It is significant that there are few children—almost none—however ' normal,' who, on first entering an atmosphere free from moral or other intimidation, do not undergo what seems to be a cathartic process. The more model the child, the more violently anti-social this phase is apt to be. And, what is most encouraging, a new poise is established which seems to be more stable and more inclusive than the former.

Flexible conditions make possible what seem to me two main essentials of education ; on the one hand, that each child shall have a fundamentally friendly attitude towards the world, as a place congenial to his creative activity ; and on the other hand, that he shall submit himself to a discipline without which any high degree of creative activity in individual or social life is

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impossible.[1] In schools, the price paid for one of these conditions is usually the other, but both are important. The friendliness will develop best in response to friendliness, when he feels that the grown-ups he meets like and understand him. (Teachers interested in their subject and not in their pupils, and entering the profession as a *pis aller*, can be usefully employed, but are mostly a plain nuisance). Both like and understand. To let him feel that they like him without understanding him puts a premium on self-consciousness and insincerity ; and there is no chance at all of serious education with a child who feels that he is understood without being liked. So long as his attitude remains fundamentally friendly, the situations are unlikely to arise which end in a skin-deep culture. But the discipline and discrimination is no less essential than the friendliness. To this end he should feel that the grown-ups, while continuing to like him, are prepared to disapprove of the things he does. The most immediate gratification does not always give the most lasting satisfaction ; habits must be formed which are not easy at the outset ; there are very many situations in which an educator must intervene firmly or even for a while harshly. As it has been one of the aims of *Scrutiny* to point out that exactly these situations are more numerous and can be more subtle than is generally admitted, it would be tedious to labour the point ; I would simply add that such intervention is only likely to have its full effect if it is felt to come from a friendly source.

The discussion has taken us a good way from its starting-point ; and yet, I believe, not so far. If it be admitted that, as I have by implication maintained, the present cultural situation is due as far as education is concerned, not merely to unintelligent teaching in the last years of school life, but to unintelligent handling and the frustration of effort through the whole of school life, and before, then these pedagogicalities have not been so far from the point. Potential intelligence is likely to be realized not so much by direct training alone as by that in conjunction with a general education likely to ensure emotional balance. An educational system could be thought successful if it left the bulk

[1]If I had unlimited space, terms like ' creative activity ' and ' fundamentally friendly ' would demand definition. Here I would merely dissociate myself from the N.E.F. worship of creativeness.

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of its pupils with a desire for richer and fuller experiences, and the power to come by them. For a small minority, our own system does this well enough, though even for them it might work better ; but for the majority? A glance at any paperstall or bookshop gives the answer.

There is little likelihood that any amount of teaching on the lines of *Culture and Environment* is likely, *alone*, to reduce appreciably the circulation of the Sunday papers. It is a question of some importance. The vulgarizing influences we have described make their appeal by offering cheap, too-easy gratifications. A taste for these is undoubtedly strengthened by habit, but the taste is most likely to grow strong where the gratifications are satisfying some need. Most often the enjoyment offered is one due to phantasy, or to the unrecognized and therefore respectable venting of different forms of hate ; these are almost invariably components. The need for the former, which is bound up with the conditions of modern living, is most likely (if at all) to be reduced by the growth of more serious leisure interests. The second, unconscious hate, is a difficult and highly controversial matter. It may develop in various ways, and one can hardly guess how heavy or light the charge of hate may become ; by one account, at least, it can be very considerable. Conceivably the amount by which we can increase or diminish, through education, infantile charges of sadism and masochism is a negligible fraction. Sympathetic understanding, however, seems in actual practice to result in very far-reaching changes in a child's whole make-up, at least in so far as that manifests itself in every-day life. It seems to me, therefore, that the fostering of intelligence on every level will have greater scope in a flexible educational system which, to put only the negative side, minimises the accumulated hate that is due to frustration and even more directly to punishment. Reforms in this direction are immediately practicable. The greatest obstacle to really rapid changes will be the present apparent dearth of intelligence that could make use of increased opportunities. The objection more usually raised is that their cost, with such small classes, would be prohibitive. In a sense, this is true. The question is, how we are to spend the money at our disposal ; armaments will certainly continue to be necessary as long as our irrational fears make us think them so.

RAYMOND O'MALLEY.

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REVALUATIONS (VI)

WORDSWORTH

WORDSWORTH'S greatness and its nature seem to be, in a general way, pretty justly recognized in current acceptance, the established habit of many years. Clear critical recognition, however, explicit in critical statement, is another matter, and those who really read him to-day—who read him as they read contemporary literature—will agree that, in spite of the number of distinguished critics who have written on him, satisfactory statement is still something to be attempted. And to attempt it with any measure of success would be to revalue Wordsworth, to achieve a clearer insight and a fresh realization.

There is—a time-honoured critical blur or indecision—the question of Wordsworth's 'thought.' 'I think Wordsworth possessed more of the genius of a great philosophic poet than any man I ever knew, or, as I believe, has existed in England since Milton,' said Coleridge. With this pronouncement, standing by itself, no one need be concerned to quarrel; most Wordsworthians, probably, see in it something for positive acclaim. But under the same date[1] in *Table Talk* Coleridge has already been more explicit: 'Then the plan laid out and, I believe, partly suggested by me, was, that Wordsworth should assume the station of a man in mental repose, one whose principles were made up, and so prepared to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy . . . It is in substance what I have been all my life doing in my system of philosophy.' 'System of philosophy,' it might still be contended (in spite, perhaps, of the concluding reference to Coleridge's own system), is an expression susceptible of more than one value, but it is generally agreed that Coleridge here proposes for Wordsworth an ambition that proved unmistakably to be far beyond Wordsworth's powers. If the great design fell so far short of realization, that was not for lack of time or will. This there is no need to

[1]July 21, 1832.

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argue. What does seem worth insisting on is the felicitous accuracy (unconscious, no doubt) of Arnold's word when he says that the ' philosophy ' is an ' illusion.'

For Wordsworth's ' philosophy ' certainly appears, as such, to invite discussion and there is a general belief that we all know, or could know by re-reading *The Prelude*, what his doctrines concerning the growth of the mind and relation of Man to Nature are. His philosophic verse has a convincingly expository tone and manner, and it is difficult not to believe, after reading, say, Book II of *The Prelude*, that one has been reading a paraphrasable argument—difficult not to believe, though the paraphrase, if resolutely attempted, would turn out to be impossible. Few readers, it would seem, have ever made the attempt, and, in fact, to make it resolutely is the real difficulty—if ' difficulty ' can describe the effect of a subtle, pervasive and almost irresistible dissuasion from effort.

This, at any rate, describes fairly the working of Wordsworth's philosophic verse. His triumph is to command the kind of attention he requires and to permit no other. To demonstrate this conclusively is much easier in spoken discussion before an open text than in writing: one really needs to go through some hundreds of lines of *The Prelude*, Book II, analysing and commenting. Here a few illustrations must suffice, as indeed, to point the attention effectively, they should: that once done, the demonstration is the reading, as anyone who cares to open his Wordsworth may see ; the facts, to the adverted eye, are obvious.

Consider, to start with, a representative improvement as revealed in Professor de Selincourt's admirable edition of *The Prelude*. A key passage runs, in the version of 1805-6 (ll. 238-266):

> Bless'd the infant Babe,
> (For with my best conjectures I would trace
> The progress of our Being) blest the Babe,
> Nurs'd in his Mother's arms, the Babe who sleeps
> Upon his Mother's breast, who, when his soul
> Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
> Doth gather passion from his Mother's eye!
> Such feelings pass into his torpid life
> Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind

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Even [in the first trial of its powers]
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
In one appearance all the elements
And parts of the same object, else detach'd
And loth to coalesce. Thus day by day,
Subjected to the discipline of love,
His organs and recipient faculties
Are quicken'd, are more vigorous, his mind spreads,
Tenacious of the forms which it receives.
In one beloved presence, nay and more,
In that most apprehensive habitude
And those sensations which have been deriv'd
From this beloved Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
All objects through all intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewilder'd and depress'd ;
Along his infant veins are interfus'd
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature, that connect him with the world.
Emphatically such a Being lives,
An inmate of this *active* universe . . .

In the version of 1850 we read (ll. 233-254):

Blest the infant Babe,
(For with my best conjecture I would trace
Our Being's earthly progress) blest the Babe,
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
Rocked on his Mother's breast ; who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
Too weak to gather it, already love
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him

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Hath beautified that flower ; already shades
Of pity cast from inward tenderness
Do fall around him upon aught that bears
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
Emphatically such a Being lives
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
An inmate of this active universe . . .

No one is likely to dispute that the later version is decidedly the more satisfactory. But it is worth asking in what way. The earlier, it will be noticed, is by very much the more explicit. More important, it calls for a different kind of attention—the kind of attention one gives to a philosophical or psychological argument.

. . . eager to combine
In one appearance, all the elements
And parts of the same object, else detached
And loth to coalesce.

In one beloved presence, nay and more,
In that most apprehensive habitude
And those sensations which have been deriv'd
From this beloved Presence . . .

—The phraseology is technical, and we are reminded of that close study of Hartley, and of Wordsworth's belief (as a philosopher) that associationism explained his own experience. (That belief itself suggests pretty forcibly how external in Wordsworth was the relation between systematic philosopher and poet ; and a comment on his debt to Hartley is the exasperating classification, on Hartleian principles, of the collected Poems). Actually, the earlier version does not explain anything any more satisfactorily than the later: the parts afterwards omitted merely incite to an attention that the argument will not bear. Not that Wordsworth is likely to have given himself this reason for the change ; guided by his poet's touch, he was reducing recalcitrant elements to the general mode in which the best parts of *The Prelude* are written.

That mode is one examined by Mr. Empson (from his own special approach) in an analysis of the central passage of *Tintern Abbey* (see *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, pp. 191-194). His analysis, though he misquotes and seriously mispunctuates, is in general

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effect sound enough: he is exhibiting in a particular instance, which could be very easily matched, what many readers of Wordsworth besides the present one must have known as an essential Wordsworthian habit. Wordsworth in such passages as are in question produces the mood, feeling or experience and at the same time appears to be giving an explanation of it. The expository effect sorts well with—blends into—the characteristic meditative gravity of the emotional presentment ('emotion recollected in tranquillity'), and in the key passages, where significance seems specially to reside, the convincing success of the poetry covers the argument: it is only by the most resolute and sustained effort (once it occurs to one that effort is needed) that one can pay to the argument, as such, the attention it appears to have invited and satisfied. And when one does pay the necessary attention one always finds the kind of thing illustrated in Mr. Empson's analysis.

How difficult it is to attend to the argument Mr. Empson, earlier in his book, perhaps illustrates unwittingly: 'Wordsworth frankly had no inspiration other than his use, when a boy, of the mountains as a totem or father-substitute . . .' (*Ambiguity*, p. 26). Mr. Empson, of course, may be able to give some good reason for his remark, and one can think of passages he might cite. But the principal document is Book II of *The Prelude*, and Wordsworth there stresses the mother: he explicitly and at length relates the mode of experience celebrated in the famous central passage of *Tintern Abbey* (that analysed by Mr. Empson) to the experience of the child in its mother's arms.

In the passage quoted above (in both versions) it is plain enough. Yet I myself must confess to having been long familiar, if that is the word, with Book II before I really took note of what the passage was about—realized its relation to the passage in *Tintern Abbey*. Then reading it one day (in the earlier version) I found myself halting at:

> In one beloved presence, nay and more,
> In that most apprehensive habitude
> And those sensations which have been deriv'd
> From this beloved Presence, there exists
> A virtue which irradiates and exalts
> All objects through all intercourse of sense.

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Partly it was that ' Presence ' (the mother's), recalling the common Wordsworthian use of the word: ' A Presence which is not to be put by '—' A presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts.' But more still it was the feeling that the full stop came too soon—that a final phrase was missing. And then the phrase offered itself:

> And rolls through all things.

Plainly, what had arrested me was the suggestion of the lines in *Tintern Abbey*:

> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

For the first time I recognized with full attention and complete realization what is quite explicit: that Wordsworth here is explaining how he comes to have the kind of experience he describes in *Tintern Abbey*. Or, lest I should be misunderstood, let me say that for the first time it occurred to me to put it in this way, for the meaning must be in some sense clear at first reading. So hard is it (for I have established by experiment and inquiry that I am not, in this matter, exceptionally obtuse) to read Wordsworth with the kind of attention that the argument, if it were what it appears to be, would demand. Actually, of course, no real explaining is done in either version, and in the later Wordsworth removes all incitement to the inquiry whether or not what he offers would be accepted as an explanation if it were rendered in prose. The poetry, uninterrupted in the amended version, is complete and satisfactory; it defines convincingly—presents in such a way that no further explanation seems necessary—the sense of ' belonging ' in the universe, of a kinship known inwardly though the rising springs of life and consciousness and outwardly in an interplay of recognition and response:

> No outcast he, bewilder'd and depress'd;
> Along his infant veins are interfus'd
> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of nature, that connect him with the world.

—' Thank God I am not free, any more than a rooted tree is free.' The play of varied metaphorical implications (the imagery

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is complex—' interfus'd,' ' gravitation,' ' filial bond ') does what a Hartleian commentary can only weaken.

Even if there were not so much poetry to hold the mind in a subtly incompatible mode of attention, it would still be difficult to continue attending to the philosophic argument, because of the way in which the verse, evenly meditative in tone and movement, goes on and on, without dialectical suspense and crisis or rise and fall. By an innocently insidious trick Wordsworth, in this calm ruminative progression, will appear to be preoccupied with a scrupulous nicety of statement, with a judicial weighing of alternative possibilities, while actually making it more difficult to check the argument from which he will emerge, as it were inevitably, with a far from inevitable conclusion. Examine, for instance, what leads up to the ' Thus ' of line 415 in Book II (1805-6 ; l. 396 in the 1850 version):

> Thus did my days pass on, and now at length
> From Nature and her overflowing soul
> I had received so much that all my thoughts
> Were steep'd in feeling . . .

Nowhere does *The Prelude* yield a more satisfactory presentment of the ' thought,' though the orthodox doctrinal passages of *The Excursion*—at the beginning of Book IV, for instance—are plain enough.

Yet the burden of *The Prelude* is, nevertheless, not essentially ambiguous, and Wordsworth's didactic offer was not mere empty self-delusion. It was not for nothing that men like Mill and Leslie Stephen could count Wordsworth an influence in their lives, and there was more to be derived from him than mere emotional refreshment

> (He laid us, as we lay at birth,
> On the cool flowery lap of earth).

He had, if not a philosophy, a wisdom to communicate. The mistake encouraged by Coleridge is understandable, and we can see how *The Recluse* should have come to be projected—see, too, that the petering out of the enterprise in that long life does not prove essential failure (though it proves the enterprise misconceived). It may be said, fairly, that Wordsworth went on tinkering

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with *The Prelude* through his life instead of completing the great 'philosophic poem' because, as he had in the end tacitly to recognize, his resources weren't adequate to the ambition—he very obviously hadn't enough material. But it must also be said that in letting the ambition lapse he was equally recognizing its superfluity: his real business was achieved. His wisdom is sufficiently presented in the body of his living work.

What he had for presentment was a type and a standard of human normality, a way of life; his preoccupation with sanity and spontaneity working at a level and in a spirit that it seems appropriate to call religious. His philosophizing (in the sense of the Hartleian studies and applications) hadn't the value he meant it to have; but it is an expression of his intense moral seriousness and a mode of the essential discipline of contemplation that gave consistency and stability to his experience. Wordsworth, we know, is the 'poet of Nature,' and the associations of the term 'Nature' here are unfortunate, suggesting as it does a vaguely pantheistic religion-substitute. If this is all Wordsworth has to offer, or if, as Mr. Empson, expressing (apparently) very much this notion of him, states, he 'had no inspiration other than his use when a boy of the mountains as a totem or father-substitute,' then (the world being what it is) one may save one's irony for other things than his supersession, as the presiding genius of Lakeland, by Mr. Hugh Walpole. But Wordsworth himself, in the famous passage that, 'taken from the conclusion of the first book of *The Recluse*' he offers 'as a kind of *Prospectus* of the design and scope of the whole Poem,' proposes something decidedly different when he stresses 'the Mind of Man' as

> My haunt, and the main region of my song.

And Wordsworth here, as a matter of fact, is critically justified. Creative power in him, as in most great poets, was accompanied by a high degree of critical consciousness in the use of it. His critical writings give a good view of his creative preoccupations; and both his main preoccupation and his achievement are fairly intimated by this passage from the *Letter to John Wilson*:

> 'You have given me praise for having reflected faithfully in my Poems the feelings of human nature. I would fain hope

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that I have done so. But a great Poet ought to do more than this ; he ought, to a certain degree, to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feelings, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things. He ought to travel before men occasionally as well as at their sides.'

' Nature ' in the phrase ' poet of Nature ' can hardly be made to take on the force suggested here ; that is why the description is so unacceptable. Wordsworth's preoccupation was with a distinctively human naturalness, with sanity and spiritual health, and his interest in mountains was subsidiary. His mode of preoccupation, it is true, was that of a mind intent always upon ultimate sanctions, and upon the living connexions between man and the extra-human universe ; it was, that is, in the same sense as Lawrence's was, religious.

If the association of Wordsworth's name with Lawrence's seems incongruous, as it may reasonably do, the following passage, nevertheless, is very well-known:

> For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
> Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
> To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.
> All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
> That ever was put forth in personal form—
> Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
> Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
> I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
> The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
> Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
> By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
> As fall upon us often when we look
> Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
> My haunt, and the main region of my song.

This, perhaps, may not extravagantly be allowed to recall Lawrence's preoccupation with the deep levels, the springs, of life, the illimitable mystery that wells up into consciousness (*cf.* ' This is the innermost symbol of man: alone in the darkness

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of the cavern of himself, listening to the soundlessness of inflowing fate '). It is possible, at any rate, to rest too easily satisfied with the sense one commonly has of Wordsworth as of a tranquil surface reflecting the sky. How little a ' wise passiveness ' (the purpose of which being in Lawrence's words—and there is point in applying words of Lawrence here—' so that that which is perfectly ourselves can take place in us ') is mere passiveness the lines quoted above from *The Recluse* sufficiently convey.

But the main effect of bringing Wordsworth and Lawrence together must, of course, be contrast. And the contrast that is proposed by Lawrence's notoriety is a violent one. His preoccupation with sex is vulgarly both misconceived and overemphasized ; nevertheless, no one would dispute that it is an essential characteristic. Wordsworth's poetry, on the other hand, is remarkable for exhibiting the very opposite of such a preoccupation—for that is perhaps the best way of putting the case, which may be very easily misrepresented or misapprehended. Shelley, for instance, in *Peter Bell the Third*, says:

> But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
> To be a kind of moral eunuch ;
> He touched the hem of Nature's shift,
> Felt faint—and never dared uplift
> The closest, all-concealing tunic.

Peter Bell the Third contains some very good criticism of Wordsworth, but this stanza tells us more about Shelley—it is of him that that kind of ' feeling faint ' is characteristic. Shelley, indeed, is unwittingly illustrating the difference between himself and Wordsworth that he intends to be commenting on.

It is the difference constituting so large an element in the contrast felt, at a glance, when passages of Wordsworth and Shelley are juxtaposed. There is an obvious contrast in movement ; or rather, of Shelley's eager, breathless hurry—his verse always seems to lean forward, so that it must run in order not to fall—with Wordsworth's static contemplation (' I gazed and gazed . . . '). But the immediately relevant prompting is to description in terms of temperature: if Wordsworth, as Shelley says, is ' cold ' (which is truer in suggestion than ' felt faint,' and hardly congruous with it), Shelley himself seems fevered. And the effect of warmth

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derives very largely from the pervasiveness in Shelley's verse of caressing, cherishing, fondling, and, in general, sensuously tender, suggestions, explicit and implicit, more and less subtle. To bring these under the general head of the ' erotic ' may seem arbitrary, yet an examination of Shelley's work will show the relation between the ' gentle odours ' of this first stanza of *The Question* and the subsequent image of embracing, so significantly inappropriate, to be representative:

> I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
> Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
> And gentle odours led my steps astray,
> Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
> Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
> Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
> Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
> But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

At any rate, one of the most remarkable facts about Wordsworth's poetry is the virtual absence from it of this whole set of associations and suggestions, and it is this absence that Shelley, when he calls Wordsworth ' cold,' is remarking upon ; this is the fact, however perceived, that evokes that ' moral eunuch.' The nature of the fact neither Shelley nor, in his psycho-analytics about Wordsworth's poetic decline, Mr. Herbert Read recognizes. The pathological efficacy that Mr. Read ascribes to the episode of Annette Vallon is discredited by the peculiarity just noted: such an absence of the erotic element hardly suggests repression. It suggests that, whatever reason Wordsworth may have had for choosing not to deal in ' animated description of the pleasures of love,' he had no need of subconscious relief and covert outlets.

There are, in fact, no signs of morbid repression anywhere in Wordsworth's poetry. And his various prose remarks about love plainly come from a mind that is completely free from timidity or uneasiness. The phrase just quoted may be found in the *Letter to John Wilson* (1800). Discussing there the limiting bents and prepossessions that disqualify different readers, ' some,' says Wordsworth, ' cannot tolerate a poem with a ghost or any supernatural agency in it ; others would shrink from an animated description of the pleasures of love, as from a thing carnal and libidinous ;

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some cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions of society . . . ' To take an illustration from a later period of his life, in the *Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns* he pronounces: ' The poet, trusting to primary instincts, luxuriates among the felicities of love and wine ; nor does he shrink from the company of the passion of love, though immoderate . . .'

Sex, nevertheless, in spite of this pronouncement, is virtually absent from Wordsworth's poetry. The absence no doubt constitutes a limitation, a restriction of interest ; but is constitutes at the same time an aspect of Wordsworth's importance. The point of this remark depends on another striking difference between Wordsworth and both Lawrence and Shelley—on the characteristic of his own poetry that Wordsworth indicates here: ' I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity . . . ' Wordsworth here describes the withdrawn, contemplative collectedness of his poetry—' Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose,' and the double description has been elucidated earlier in the *Preface*:

> ' Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived ; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings ; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so . . . ' etc.

Spontaneity, that is, as Wordsworth seeks it, involves no cult of the instinctive and primitive at the expense of the rational and civilized ; it is the spontaneity supervening upon complex

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development, a spontaneity engaging an advanced and delicate organization. He stands for a distinctly human naturalness ; one, that is, consummating a discipline, moral and other. A poet who can bring home to us the possibility of such a naturalness should to-day be found important. In Wordsworth's poetry the possibility is offered us realized—realized in a mode central and compelling enough to enforce the bearing of poetry upon life, the significance of this poetry for actual living. The absence both of the specifically sexual in any recognizable form and of any sign of repression serves to emphasize this significance, the significance of this achieved naturalness, spontaneous, and yet the expression of an order and the product of an emotional and moral training.

No one should, after what has been said, find it necessary to impute to the critic at this point, or to suppose him to be applauding in Wordsworth, a puritanic warp. Wordsworth was, on the showing of his poetry and everything else, normally and robustly human. The selectiveness and the habit of decorum involved in ' recollection in tranquillity ' were normal and, in a wholly laudatory sense of the word, conventional ; that is, so endorsed by common usage as to be natural. The poetic process engaged an organization that had, by his own account, been determined by an upbringing in a congenial social environment, with its wholesome simple pieties and the traditional sanity of its moral culture, which to him were nature. He may have been a ' romantic,' but it would be misleading to think of him as an individualist. The implicit social and moral preoccupation of his self-cummunings in solitude, his recollecting in tranquillity, is fairly suggested by this, from the *Letter to John Wilson*:

> ' I return then to the question, please whom? or what? I answer, human nature as it has been and ever will be. But, where are we to find the best measure of this? I answer, from within ; by stripping our own hearts naked, and by looking out of ourselves towards men who lead the simplest lives, and most according to nature ; men who have never known false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, false criticisms, effeminate habits of thinking and feeling, or who having known these things have outgrown them. This latter class is the most to be depended upon, but it is very small in number.'

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This, of course, is in a sense commonplace about Wordsworth. Yet it would appear to be very easy, in a confusion of anecdotage and criticism, biography and poetry, to slip into giving the observation that he was self-centred a wholly uncritical and misleading effect.

> He had as much imagination
> As a pint-pot ;—he never could
> Fancy another situation
> From which to dart his contemplation
> Than that wherein he stood.

Shelley here again notes a striking difference between himself and Wordsworth. He could hardly be expected to note—what is not the commonplace it ought to be—that the self-projecting and ardently altruistic Shelley is, in the comparison, the narrowly limited and the egoist (which term, it may be added, applies with less injustice to Milton than to Wordsworth). Wordsworth, it is true, has no dramatic gift, and compared with Shakespeare's, the range of interests he exhibits is narrow. But he exhibits also in his poetry, as an essential characteristic, an impersonality unknown to Shelley.

This characteristic (consider the capacity and the habit it implies) is closely associated with the social-moral centrality insisted on above. The insistence will no doubt be challenged ; it is at any rate time to take account of the aspect of Wordsworth stressed by Dr. Bradley in the well-known essay (see *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*). Wordsworth is often spoken of as a ' mystic,' and the current valuation would appear to rest his greatness largely upon the ' visionary moments ' and ' spots of time.' Wordsworth himself undoubtedly valued the ' visionary ' element in his experience very highly, and it is important to determine what significance he attributes to it. In this passage from Book II of *The Prelude* he is as explicit as he ever is:

> and, at that time,
> Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
> To breathe an elevated mood, by form
> Or image unprofaned ; and I would stand,
> Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are
> The ghostly language of the ancient earth,

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Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power.
I deem not profitless these fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, to which,
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they still
Have something to pursue.

It would be difficult to suggest anything more elusive than this possibility which the soul glimpses in ' visionary ' moments and,

Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not,

retains an ' obscure sense ' of.[1] Perhaps it will be agreed that, though Wordsworth no doubt was right in feeling that he had something to pursue, the critic here is in a different case. If these ' moments ' have any significance for the critic (whose business it is to define the significance of Wordsworth's poetry), it will be established, not by dwelling upon or in them, in the hope of exploring something that lies hidden in or behind their vagueness, but by holding firmly on to that sober verse in which they are presented.

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[1] *cf.* . . . in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours; whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.
The Prelude, Book VI, ll. 599-608 (1805-6).

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How strong are the eighteenth century affinities of this verse Mr. Nichol Smith brings out when, in his introduction to the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth Verse*, he quotes a piece of Akenside and suggests rightly that it might have passed for Wordsworth. Wordsworth's roots were deep in the eighteenth century. To say this is to lay the stress again—where it ought to rest—on his essential sanity and normality.

But though he is so surely and centrally poised, the sureness has nothing of complacency about it. It rests consciously over unsounded depths and among mysteries, itself a mystery. This recognition has its value in the greater validity of the poise—in a kind of sanction resulting. So, too, Wordsworth's firm hold upon the world of common perception is the more notable in one who knows of ' fallings from us, vanishings, blank misgivings ' (' when the light of sense goes out '), and is capable of recording such moments as when

> I forgot,
> That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
> Appear'd like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in my mind.[1]

The point of stressing Wordsworth's normality and sanity in dealing with such passages as this comes out when we turn from it to, say, Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, or compare *Mont Blanc* with Wordsworth's *Simplon Pass*.

If anyone demands a more positive valuation of the ' visionary moments ' in Wordsworth (disputing, perhaps, the complete representativeness of the ' shadowy ' passage quoted above) it may be granted that they sometimes clearly signify a revitalizing relaxation of purpose, of moral and intellectual effort, in a surrender to

> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of nature, that connect him with the world.

For if Wordsworth was too inveterately human and moral for the ' Dark Gods ' (how incongruous a phrase in connexion with him!)

[1] *The Prelude*, Book II, ll. 342-352 (1805-6).

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to be invoked here, he none the less drew strength from his sense of communion with the non-human universe.

* * * *

'Dark Gods,' some readers will have commented, is indeed an incongruous phrase in connexion with Wordsworth. And it is now time to qualify the present account of him, as it stands now, by taking note of criticisms that it will have provoked from a quarter opposite to that saluted in the last paragraph. Doesn't, for instance, the formula, 'recollection in tranquillity,' apply to Wordsworth's poetry with a limiting effect that has as yet not been recognized? Is the tranquillity of this wisdom really at all close to any 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'? Are the feelings, as recollected, so very powerful?

It has to be admitted that the present of this poetry is, for the most part, decidedly tranquil and that the emotion—anything in the nature of strong excitement or disturbance—seems to belong decidedly to the past. If, as might be said, the strength of the poetry is that it brings maturity and youth into relation, the weakness is that the experience from which it draws life is confined mainly to youth, and lies at a distance. What, an intelligent contemporary reader might have asked at the creative period, will happen as youth recedes? What did happen we know, in any case, and the fact of the decline may reasonably be held to have a bearing on the due estimate of Wordsworth's wisdom.

In the discussion above of the distinctive characteristics of his poetry 'poise' has received some emphasis; further inquiry is necessary in the direction that the term suggests. There is, relevant to this inquiry, a significant passage in Book I of *The Excursion*:

> From his native hills
> He wandered far; much did he see of men,
> Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,
> Their passions and their feelings; chiefly those
> Essential and eternal in the heart,
> That, 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,
> Exist more simple in their elements,
> And speak a plainer language. In the woods,
> A lone Enthusiast, and among the fields,

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Itinerant in this labour, he had passed
The better portion of his time ; and there
Spontaneously had his affections thriven
Amid the bounties of the year, the peace
And liberty of nature ; there he kept
In solitude and solitary thought
His mind in a just equipoise of love.
Serene it was, unclouded by the cares
Of ordinary life ; unvexed, unwarped
By partial bondage. In his steady course,
No piteous revolutions had he felt,
No wild varieties of joy and grief.
Unoccupied by sorrow of its own,
His heart lay open ; and by nature tuned
And constant disposition of his thoughts
To sympathy with man, he was alive
To all that was enjoyed where'er he went,
And all that was endured ; for in himself
Happy and quiet in his cheerfulness,
He had no painful pressure from without
That made him turn aside from wretchedness
With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer
With those whom he saw suffer.

The Wanderer as described here would seem to be very much what the intelligent reader imagined above might have expected Wordsworth to become. Indeed, the description is, fairly obviously, very much in the nature of an idealized self-portrait. If Wordsworth, even when well embarked on *The Excursion*, was not quite this, this clearly is what he would have liked to be. That he should have wished to be this is significant. That he should have needed to wish it is the great difference between himself and the Wanderer. For Wordsworth's course had not been steady ; he sought the Wanderer's ' equipoise ' just because of the ' piteous revolutions ' and the wild varieties of joy and grief,' that he had, so disturbingly, known. The Wanderer could not have written Wordsworth's poetry ; it emerges out of Wordsworth's urgent personal problem ; it is the answer to the question: ' How, in a world that has shown itself to be like this, is it possible to go on living? '

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Behind, then, the impersonality of Wordsworth's wisdom there is an immediately personal urgency. Impelling him back to childhood and youth— to their recovery in a present of tranquil seclusion —there are the emotional storms and disasters of the intervening period, and these are also implicitly remembered, if not ' recollected,' in the tranquillity of his best poetry. In so far as his eyes may fairly be said to ' avert their ken from half of human fate,' extremely painful awareness of this half is his excuse. For if his problem was personal, it was not selfishly so, not merely self-regarding ; and it is also a general one: if (and how shall they not?) the sensitive and imaginative freely let their ' hearts lie open ' to the suffering of the world, how are they to retain any health or faith for living? Conflicting duties seem to be imposed (for it is no mere blind instinct of self-preservation that is in question). Wordsworth is not one of the few great tragic artists, but probably not many readers will care to censure him for weakness or cowardice. His heart was far from ' unoccupied by sorrow of its own,' and his sense of responsibility for human distress and his generously active sympathies had involved him in emotional disasters that threatened his hold on life. A disciplined limiting of contemplation to the endurable, and, consequently, a withdrawal to a reassuring environment, became terrible necessities for him.

It is significant that (whatever reason Wordsworth may have had for putting it there) the story of Margaret should also appear in Book I of *The Excursion*, following, as it does, close upon the description of the Wanderer. It seems to me the finest thing that Wordsworth wrote, and it is certainly the most disturbingly poignant. The poignancy assures us with great force that the Wanderer, for all his familiarity with the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, is not Wordsworth—not, at any rate, the poet ; and it clearly bears a significant relation to the early date of composition: Wordsworth began *Margaret ; or, The Ruined Cottage*—the substance of this part of Book I of *The Excursion*—in 1795 and finished in 1797. At this period he was, we have reason to believe, striving towards his ' equipoise ' with great difficulty ; striving, because of his great need.

The difficulty does not merely appear in the poignancy of the poetry, which contrasts so with the surrounding verse ; it gets

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its implicit comment in the by-play between Wordsworth and the Wanderer. At a painful point in the story ' the Wanderer paused ' (l. 592):

> ' Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,
> And in the weakness of humanity,
> From natural wisdom turn our hearts away ;
> To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears ;
> And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
> The calm of nature with our restless thoughts? '

Wordsworth gladly acquiesced:

> That simple tale
> Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.

But it refused to be dismissed ; it rose insistently up through the distracting idle talk:

> In my own despite
> I thought of that poor Woman as of one
> Whom I had known and loved.

No doubt the particular memory of Annette asserts itself here, but that recognition (or guess) makes it all the more important to give due weight to the corrective hint thrown out by the Wanderer a little later:

> ' 'Tis a common tale,
> An ordinary sorrow of man's life . . .'

—Wordsworth at this date cannot easily afford to suffer with those whom he sees suffer.

That is very apparent in the way ' that Woman's sufferings ' (which had ' seemed present ') are, at the end of the story, distanced. Wordsworth, ' in the impotence of grief,' turns to trace, around the Cottage, the ' secret spirit of humanity ' that ' still survives '

> 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies
> Of nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers
> And silent overgrowings . . .

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The ' old Man,' with consummate poetic skill, endorses those tendencies:

> Why then should we read
> The forms of things with an unworthy eye?
> She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.
> I well remember that those very plumes,
> Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
> By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,
> As once I passed, into my heart conveyed
> So still an image of tranquillity,
> So calm and still, and looked so beautiful
> Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
> That what we feel of sorrow and despair
> From ruin and from change, and all the grief
> That passing shows of Being leave behind,
> Appeared an idle dream . . .

Michael was written in 1800—three years later. Wordsworth here has no need to withdraw his mind from the theme to a present ' image of tranquillity.' The things of which he speaks never ' seem present ' in this story ; they are seen always as belonging, in their moving dignity, to the past. ' Recollection ' holds them at such a distance that serenity, for all the pathos, never falters ; and an idealizing process, making subtle use of the mountain background, gives to ' human suffering ' a reconciling grandeur. *Michael*, of course, is only one poem (and an exceptionally fine one), but the implied representative significance of this comparison with *Margaret* is justly implied. When in the characteristic good poetry of Wordsworth painful things are dealt with we find them presented in modes, more and less subtle, that are fairly intimated by his own phrase (the context[1] of which is very relevant):

> Remov'd and to a distance that was fit.

In *Michael* Wordsworth is very much more like the Wanderer. What, the contemporary reader already invoked may be imagined as asking, will be the next phase in the development? What will happen as youth, where lie the emotional sources of his poetry—

[1] *The Prelude*, VIII, l. 305 (1850).

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' the hiding-places of my power '—and young manhood, which, in the way suggested, provides the creative pressure and incitement, recede further and further into the past, and the ' equipoise ' became a settled habit? The answer appears plainly enough in the description of the Wanderer—in that complacent ' partial bondage ' and in that curiously italicized ' *afford* ' : one may come to afford too easily. The equipoise settles towards inertness:

> I long for a repose that ever is the same.

The *Ode to Duty* (1805) from which this line comes would of course, be cited by many as going with the patriotic sonnets of these years to prove that Wordsworth, so far from subsiding in the way suggested, had acquired a new ' inspiration,' a new source of energy. The Ode, no doubt, is an impressive performance ; but it may be ventured that few to whom Wordsworth matters would grieve much if some very inferior bard were proved to have written it. As for the sonnets, their quality is a comment on the value to the poet of his new inspiration: the worst of them (look, for instance, at ' It is not to be thought of . . . ') are lamentable clap-trap, and the best, even if they are distinguished declamation, are hardly distinguished poetry. And the association in general of these patriotic-moral habits with a settled addiction to Miltonizing has to be noted as (in the poet of the *Lyrical Ballads*) significant.

It is not that these new attitudes, and the process by which he settled into them, are not wholly respectable. There was never anything incompatible between the ' natural piety ' that his poetry cherishes and celebrates and the immemorial pieties and loyalties centring in the village church (see his reference to the ' Village Steeple ' in Book X of *The Prelude*, 1805-6 ; l. 268). The transition was easy. But when he made it his days ceased to be ' bound each to each ' back to childhood. No longer could he say:

> The days gone by
> Come back upon me from the dawn almost
> Of life: the hiding-places of my power
> Seem open . . .

The Wordsworth who in the *Ode to Duty* spoke of the ' genial sense of youth ' as something he happily surrendered had seen

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the hiding places of his power close. The ' equipoise ' had lost its vitality ; the exquisitely fine and sensitive organization of the poet no longer informed and controlled his pen. The energy of the new patriotic-moral interests, far from bringing the poet new life, took the place of creative sensibility, and confirmed and ensured its loss.

In fact, the new power belongs, it might be said, not to the ' hiding places '—it has no connexion with them—but to the public platform (a metaphor applying obviously to the patriotic development, with which, it should be noted, the religious is not accidentally associated): the public voice is a substitute for the inner voice, and engenders an insensitiveness to this—to its remembered (or, at least, to its recorded) burden and tone. For the sentiments and attitudes of the patriotic and Anglican Wordsworth do not come as the intimately and particularly realized experience of an unusually and finely conscious individual ; they are external, general and conventional ; their quality is that of the medium they are proffered in, which is insensitively Miltonic, a medium not felt into from within as something at the nerve-tips, but handled from outside. This is to question, not their sincerity, but their value and interest ; their representativeness is not of the important kind. Their relation to poetry may be gathered from the process to which, at their dictation, Wordsworth subjected *The Prelude*: in the pursuit of formal orthodoxy he freely falsified and blunted the record of experience.

This process is forecast in the *Immortality Ode*, the essential purpose of which is to justify it. Criticism of stanza VIII (' Mighty Prophet! Seer blest! ') has been permissible, even correct, since Coleridge's time. But the empty grandiosity apparent there is merely the local manifestation of a general strain, a general factitiousness. The Ode (1803-6) belongs to the transition at its critical phase and contains decided elements of the living. But these do not lessen the dissatisfaction that one feels with the movement—the movement that makes the piece an ode in the Grand Style ; for, as one reads, it is in terms of the movement that the strain, the falsity, first asserts itself. The manipulations by which the changes of mood are indicated have, by the end of the third stanza, produced an effect that, in protest, one describes as rhythmic vulgarity (for Dryden to do this kind of thing is quite another

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matter). The effort towards the formal ode is, clearly, the effort towards the formal attitude (Wordsworth himself being the public in view), and the strain revealed in technique has an obvious significance. What this is it hardly needs stanza VI to proclaim:

> . . . even with something of a Mother's mind
> And no unworthy aim,
> The homely Nurse doth all she can
> To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
> Forget the glories he hath known,
> And that imperial palace whence he came.

There is no suggestion of 'that imperial palace' in the relevant parts of *The Prelude*, and 'Foster child' patently falsifies the feeling towards 'Earth' ('the gravitation and the filial bond') recorded there.

* * * *

The bearing of Wordsworth's decline on the evaluation of his poetry hardly needs to be explicitly formulated. The poetry remains what it is; an understanding of the decline makes us more aware, perhaps, of limitations—of conditions limiting the value, but it also brings a heightened sense of the representative human significance.

What is reflected upon by the poetic decline is not so much the essential 'wisdom' spoken of earlier, as the degree of fulness and immediacy with which the poetry grasps and realizes what it offers—with which Wordsworth grasped and realized what he perceived. To say this, of course, is not to say anything precise; it is merely a way of pointing, of attempting a justly suggestive emphasis.

F. R. Leavis.

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THE NOVELS OF JEAN GIONO

I NEED hardly beg to be excused for what may seem a rather uncritical approach to the works of Jean Giono. Indeed, it is premature and preposterous, at the present stage of his literary career, to examine them with a view to definitive conclusions. That is not our aim. Though he has already written a good half-dozen novels, many short stories, two or three plays and some poetry, yet he is so constantly developing, and, in spite of external appearances, so unlike to-day what he was yesterday, that it would be unwise to pin him down with assumptions that he is this or that. He never ceases to astonish his critics, and never will. But, in spite of a wide audience in France and in many foreign countries, he does not seem to have received in England the recognition he deserves. In some way this essay is a kind of introduction to Jean Giono for the English reader.

* * * *

The first thing one must say about him, and it will explain a lot, is that he is a native of and has always lived in the *Basses-Alpes*. Let us see what that means. Not much fuss has ever been made about that ' département,' one of the poorest and most self-effacing of the ninety which constitute France. It lies outside Provence properly so-called, and has only the mean honour of bordering on the great Alps—a situation to be nearly ashamed of. It is despised by the tourist and unknown on the literary map, except for Gassendi, who is darkly remembered as a Cartesian controversialist, and Elimir Bourges. I forget Paul Arène, who follows in the rear of Alphonse Daudet, a dwarfish and pale figure. The Marseillais consider the Basses-Alpes as a kind of distant suburb, with a few goats capering on barren hillsides. But this is sheer ignorance and prepossession.

In fact, the ' département ' of the Basses-Alpes is, geographically, one of the most diverse of France, and, spiritually, its

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population has preserved an independence unknown elsewhere. On the south, it offers an escape from Provence and its flat vulgarity, which is an inevitable gift of Marseilles and of the official renown that splendid province has acquired through Mistral's glory and Cook's agencies. On the North-East, it dwindles towards Italy, with its narrow and deep valleys, its high passes and already wild and weird mountains. On the North-West, there stands the mysterious Montagne de Lure, asleep like a big cat, peaceful and threatening, now with her thick fur of trees bristling on her rounded back, now barren and bald with wide stretches of white and sharp flints. The ' département ' is cut into two by the valley of the Durance, which runs southwards, and, on each side, there rise a number of uneven tablelands, swept by the raging and powerful blast of the ' mistral.' Most of the villages are perched on the hills, their grey or pink tiled roofs huddling round an ancient steeple, with straggling farms sitting near a fertile corn field. Few towns and hardly townspeople at all. The inhabitant is a peasant or a shepherd whose ways of living have been transmitted from generation to generation such as they were at the time of the Saracen invasion. Of course, you may meet youths riding a motorbike, and hear in the coffee-houses the blaring twang of the unknown speaker. But the soul is not much contaminated. The peasant—slow, cautious, a bit thick, unwilling to make a show of himself—still knows the land and loves it. He lives by it. However thin the crop or ' stubborn the glebe,' he likes his furrow, his vineyard, his olive-trees, his horse or his flock of sheep. He is deeply rooted there, and feels lost when his feet are not stolidly planted on his own ground. He draws the sap of the earth in more ways than this trite metaphor can express. There is between him and the earth a kind of mysterious agreement, a secret complacency which enables both to take one another for granted as it were ; they respond, that is, to each other much in the way an instinctive being does to its habitat, or a domestic animal to its natural home. The peasant's life keeps time with the long-drawn rhythm of the seasons ; he feels the effusive tenderness of Spring, the ' mellow fruitfulness ' of Autumn as a poet would do—simply, he does not mind it, he will never try to express it. The rain is the rain and it does its own job, which is to moisten the ground and joyfully soak it through to the deepest roots, and

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the time will come when the buds will out. The moon has her habits and the wind its likes and dislikes: why would a man say anything against it? This does not come from any intellectual conception of nature, but from direct experience, accumulated century after century, and death has never brought about any change in the way a poplar sheds its leaves by the end of October. So the peasant of the Basses-Alpes lives on, not the rough life of a mountaineer, nor the easy-going carelessness of the man of the plain. The climate is temperate, and yet has its assaults of frost and heat, rain and wind. There is no surfeiting mildness, nor any inhuman toughness. The sky is what it should be, partaking of the mediterranean limpidity and of the alpine translucence, living as the earth lives, changing and shivering as the forest is.

I ask the reader not to believe this is a useless *hors-d'œuvre*. If I have half opened for him the ' terra incognita ' of that country, I have already led him a good way into Jean Giono. The more so when I shall have said a few words on the language of the peasant. He speaks provençal mainly, with slight local alterations ; but not the provençal of Mistral. And he can speak French, but not the French of Anatole France. When he speaks French, he has the provençal turn of mind, he keeps the provençal syntax and vocabulary, and the result is—well, the result is the style of Jean Giono. There are very few things indeed in *Un de Baumugnes* which a peasant of, say, Sainte-Tulle could not have said in the very terms Giono makes his hero speak. Very seldom has a writer used the language of his province with such fidelity, and, in spite of all that has been wrongly said against it, with fewer literary ornaments. Yet, the language of Giono is not merely a careless confusion of provincialisms and ornate metaphors. It is the language which can only be imagined for his characters to express themselves with, given the country where they live, and the sort of life they have to live. The miracle is that this language becomes expressive of the tragedy and the poetry of any man's soul, and this could only be done by a great artist. But of this, later.

* * * *

So, one may start with the assumption that Jean Giono is a ' regionalistic writer,' provided one forgets it as soon as said. He owes all that he has done to the Basses-Alpes, and to understand

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him is to understand the Montagne de Lure, in the same way as the landscapes of Cézanne find their natural explanation in the country which surrounds Aix-en-Provence. But the paintings of Cézanne, inasmuch as they reveal to our eyes new relations between planes, light, shade and colours, bring to life, as it were, a new conception of the world of painters which decisively increases the scope of their art. So with Giono. Because both are artists endowed with a peculiar gift, they are able, with their eyes firmly set on the Montagne de Lure or on the campagne d'Aix, to raise to artistic dignity those corners of the world which might have kept for years and centuries their superb indifference to the unworthy attempts of man towards a closer comprehension.

Jean Giono was born and has always lived in Manosque. To his Italian parentage he may owe the expressive mildness of his deep blue eyes, which, to use the expression of the wife of the Headmaster of our town-college, '*semblaient faits pour attirer à lui les chiens perdus*.' He became a bank-clerk, but not of the red-tape type. In his small office, he had to be in intimate contact with the peasantry of the neighbourhood, when they came, on market days, to invest the takings from their crops. God knows if the peasants are diffident and fastidious for the choice of a confidant on such matters. . He had also, on week-days, to travel about the countryside, up to some hamlet perched on the distant hills, away to some remote farm lost on the tableland, on some business errand. Thus, in the loitering coaches of those pre-war times, during his prolonged stays in out-of-the-world villages, he made himself deeply acquainted with the country and its inhabitants. The soul of things and people began to speak to him a language which he came slowly to understand. He had only to forget himself and to relax, to become aware of strange happenings running on the surface of things, premonitory of the life underneath.

The first idea which struck him was a mere *rapprochement* of an innocent literary origin. He had the revelation that, after all, the peasants and the shepherds of the Basses-Alpes led the same sort of life and had the same sort of reactions as those of ancient Greece or Italy. There they lived, those shepherds, untouched by any literary artifice, free from any hereditary nobleness of pedantic or artistic origin, they lived *en chair et en os*,

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thoroughly unaware of the use to which shepherds had been put for centuries for the entertainment of the cultured class. There they actually lived, the peasants, eating their cucumbers and raw tomatoes, driving about their mules or whistling for their ' faithful ' dogs, ploughing and reaping, laughing and joking like any woman's son. It was as if time had not existed. The Greeks were there, divested of all literary superfluities. One had but to open one's eyes and lend one's ears, and the humanities found at last their true significance, or, may be, were of no more consequence. No more fiction, but truth. No more figments, but living beings. One could tread among the heroes and their gods, and speak to them, and shake hands with them, and Giono did not lose the opportunity.

That was the next step. I mean Giono was gifted with an uncommon power of ' making friendship ' as he says—*faire amitié*. He never feels humble nor honoured. He can talk to a swineherd or to a Minister of State at a moment's notice, without the least quickening of his heart. Not that he is proud or assuming, but he is, as we put it in French, ' *nature* '—that is simple, open, generous. He places himself immediately on the human plane, and is only sensitive to the human quality of the opposite party. So when he addresses a peasant, the man does not for a moment think of stiffening himself. The sound of his voice and the look in his eyes are reassuring. ' That's me—All right—You and me we are made of the same stuff—Come along, man—How's that sick horse of yours? ' That is not as much as said, it goes of itself ; the man, with the mysterious antennae of his body, can, antwise, know Giono for his friend.

No wonder Jean Giono can treasure up the inexhaustible wealth of facts, impressions and sensations he has only afterwards to shed into his writings. And this, he does with the same frankness, the same kindly good humour, the same infinite respect for truth. When his first book appeared, *Colline*, everybody was unanimous in praising the freshness and the accent of utter sincerity which prevailed throughout ; here was at last a writer who unmistakably ' returned to nature.' Indifferent to a literature of a certain kind, he had done away with the usual precautions of the man of letters when he turns his eyes towards the countryside and its denizens. There was none of the cold realism of the natural-

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ists, none of the enthusiastic mannerisms of Alphonse Daudet. He could speak of Provence without any maudlin reference to ruinous windmills, musical comedy shepherds, and the chirping of cicadas. Goats were not dainty nor clever, they were goats and behaved like goats. A wild-boar is a wild-boar, and there is no way out of it. Let the man who knows a wild-boar speak for it, and not him who has a certain literary conception of a wild-boar. And so it came to pass that the peasants of Jean Giono did not care a fig for the reader, no more than Jean Giono troubled himself about preventing them not caring. They spoke and lived according to their eternal preoccupations, not to make a show of themselves, not to conceal those of their habits which might have been surprising or indecorous, without even the consciousness (but that was in Giono) that there was enough nobleness in them to legitimate the attention one favoured them with. It is that downright honesty which is expressed in the attitude of Giono when he says: ' don't accuse me of witchery, I simply unroll my peasant records, and you listen.'

* * * *

Now, what do these ' records ' say to us? This should have been the main theme of our essay. But the reader will remember my ambition is nothing more than preparing the ground for an approach to them. Not that I want to leave him in the lurch—but most of the things that I am going to say now, will eventually become obvious once the contact has been established.

The ' records ' of Jean Giono tell stories, and do it in a certain way, for a certain purpose. One might say, without academic irony, that he is a story-teller, a poet and a moralist. The story-teller has his own technique, the poet his conception of the universe, the moralist his faith, which is implicit throughout the book and gives it its final import. I have said enough above not to insist on the technicalities of Giono's story-telling, nor would it suit a general essay like this. He has deliberately placed himself on the ground of truth, naked and entire, in so far as avoidance of literary artifice for its own sake is meant. He wants a direct contact with the reader, intends to show him things as they are, offering no apologies for misbehaviour of his heroes, nor exaggerating on purpose the more to strike home. He is simple

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and straightforward, honest and reliable. He can write a whole novel like *Un de Baumugnes* in the first person without being lengthy or tiresome, so lively and brisk is the rhythm of the tale, so lifelike is the phrasing, so felicitous the tone. The harmony between the language used and the variations of emotion is almost perfect. Not a jarring note. Indeed, we feel we are in the presence of a great artist.

But then, there is the poet. Here, I don't want to embark upon subtleties, but I should be inclined, because others have done it with malicious intent, to discriminate between the subject-matter and the form. I know it is a jejune distinction, but it may tell here. The fine sensibility of Giono is, so to speak, of a pagan nature. His long companionship with the men of his native province, because of his rare gift of entering into contact with them, of inspiring confidence, has finally cast his soul in the same mould as theirs. Giono, though not a peasant himself, can feel like one under any circumstances of life. He knows what the rain, or the sun, or the wind, means for a peasant, what he thinks on death or on love, how he would tend a sickly child or cure a sprained ankle, how he bends the beam of a plough, foretells the death of a tree, weighs at a glance a heap of corn on the threshing-floor. All his stock of useful or useless knowledge he is quite conversant with, and even the useless in practical matters of life may have for him a paramount importance. The amateur folklorist would dig out of Giono's works scores of puzzling details to build up anthropological theories with. The seemingly gratuitous is perhaps what interests him most, because he can there have a guess at the inmost and darkest motives of the conduct of man. What fears are in his soul, and what hopes. Why this hate and why that love. From where does that source of happiness flow in the delirium of that old man? And why the unaccountable doggedness of that other? After all, it is more than the dignity of man which is at stake, it is his very nature, and that is infinitely to be respected. Never is a character in Giono's novels mean or despicable. It is as if he ignored villany. What's the good of playing tricks with the sky, with the anger of the rain, with the serene impatience of winter? An instinctive acceptance of the mysterious forces of nature rules out the foolishness of vain revolts. It rather evolves a kind of diffuse theogony not unlike the primitive

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systems, without rites or prayer-book, to which the peasant obscurely refers to account for happenings a long way out of the scope of reason. That is what infuriated the positive and distinguished mind of a Paul Souday, an apostle of the goddess Reason. The peasants of Giono were for him undignified remnants of an age of obscurity, which were not to be extolled because they peradventure believed in the power of the evil eye, because they submitted to the encroachments of disease, because they had not lost all sense of wonder. But let the adept of reason come and live for years on end in the huge shadow of the Montagne de Lure, in the company of sheep and trees, and toil for a scanty living, without in some way paying due tribute to the gods of the place! And if the man has in him neither poetry nor a bit of madness, well he may return to his ' civilization ' and to the principles of Aristotle.

Well, ' the gods of the place ' may mean nothing in reasonable terms. But they breathe a mighty poetic atmosphere which finds expression in an almost matter-of-fact way in the life of the peasant. One finds it in a comparison, in a word, in a gesture. It is not a question of imagination, it is a question of *feeling*. Why should so many oratories have been erected throughout the countryside on places formerly dedicated to pagan gods, among which the great god Pan has been the most favoured, but for the persistence of ancient memories obscurely sailing down the ages, which no amount of science or republicanism will ever destroy? Nor do I believe it should be carelessly explained away with the word ' superstition.' For Giono, it is the great god Pan, just alluded to, who still hovers everywhere and keeps his powerful sway over the multifarious aspects of the universe. No matter if his existence is reasonably unbelievable, if he is not to be seen and touched with his traditional pointed ears and cloven hoof. He however presides over the destinies of his friends the heroes of *Colline*, *Un de Baumugnes* and *Regain*, and is to be felt everywhere.

Thus the world with which Giono is concerned is not blind and dead. Strangely living are the forces which govern it, and strongly expressive their language. While his sensibility enables him to seize the meaning of their diverse aspects, his mastery over words will enable him not to lose any when he carries them

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into human language. It is therefore not surprising that Giono should use an incredible number of images and metaphors, which alone can convey the concrete quality of his vision. So many and changing are the manifestations of that poetical life of the universe that it requires a very uncommon power of receptivity to have a fresh response always ready to flash out. The slightest shades, the most elusive plays of intention, form or light, do not escape his watchful eye. No wonder he should be accused of preciosity. But this is no literary artifice. It is only the extreme tension of the mind to be true to facts. When Giono writes for example: ' . . . the water runs with its small white paws on the pebbles,' that may seem only a precious way of saying: ' . . . the white water runs on the pebbles.' But the ' little white paws ' of the water are for him the instantaneous way of translating a certain manner of being of the thin and glittering water of some alpine stream. It may be that there is only the space of a second when an impression of *running* water can be transmitted through the channel of that metaphor. Be sure then that Giono has done it knowingly. There is probably no writer of our times who has at his disposal such an inexhaustible stock of images, and at so little expense: he has only to walk forth into his hills, and open his eyes.

* * * *

It is no more to be denied that Giono has something in him. Those of the critics who five or six years ago hailed with applause the talent of the young writer can be fully confident in his future. Book after book he goes on deepening his knowledge of things and man, and his evolution tends to more and more simplicity. *Le Grand Troupeau* and *Le Chant du Monde* already marked a widening of the subject and a more discreet use of his wonderful poetic powers. His ' cosmic lyricism,' as the Germans put it, has gained in substance and depth. He tries to find a meaning to life which would be out of reach of topical commentaries. It should be simple and grand. What he strongly believes in is the nobleness of the instinctive life of man. There is love and motherhood and the tragedy of death. There is kindness and despair and pride. There is joy, ever recurring joy. A deep craving for happiness and the disquiet of unexplained apprehensions . . .

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It would be unwise to go further, to treat Giono like a stabilized writer. The novel which he is now writing branches off in many different directions. New paths are followed which lead to yet unknown glades. The lyrical stream which carries him away is far from being exhausted. Giono, broad-shouldered, healthy and smiling, in his quiet retreat where the turmoil of the cities does not reach him, steadily pursues his task, which is to explore the hills and the clouds, to distil the salt of the earth, to tell us the colour and the taste of the hopes and fears of men. The two opposite great creations of the human mind in which he alternately refreshes his inspiration are the Bible and the Odyssey, and true it is we find in his works the deep moral teaching of the one and the powerful lyricism of both. But neither the one nor the other are enough to account for the vitality and the grandeur of his achievements, for he communes more with life than with books.

HENRI FLUCHERE.

Works of Jean Giono:

ACCOMPAGNES DE LA FLUTE. Poems, 1924.
PRESENTATION DE PAN. Essay, 1930.
PAN. I. COLLINE, 1929.
II. UN DE BAUMUGNES, 1929.
III. REGAIN. Three novels, 1930.
NAISSANCE DE L'ODYSSEE.
MANOSQUE DES PLATEAUX. Essay, 1930.
EGLOGUES. Poems.
LE GRAND TROUPEAU. Novel, 1931.
SOLITUDE DE LA PITIE. Short stories, 1932.
JEAN LE BLEU. Autobiographical, 1932.
LE SERPENT D'ETOILES. Essay.
LE CHANT DU MONDE. Novel, 1934.

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THE RELIGION OF PROGRESS

I.

THE intellectual movement which I shall discuss in this essay is associated chiefly with H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley, but also, to a lesser extent, with a number of other writers such as J. B. S. Haldane and Bertrand Russell. It has been developed in detail by Julian Huxley, and it is chiefly with reference to his works that I shall consider it. I shall leave Wells's views out of account since he is not a scientist, and I shall be concerned chiefly with the scientific aspects of the movement. The highly imaginative account of the evolution of man given in the early chapters of the *Outline of History* is not now taken seriously, and there would be no point in criticizing it. Huxley's argument, given as far as possible in his own words, runs somewhat as follows:

Christianity and all other supernatural religions are incompatible with the facts of science, and are therefore no longer adequate to modern needs. But the religious sense is a natural and legitimate function of the mind, and should be encouraged if we can find a suitable object for it. This can only be provided by science, which is our sole means of arriving at truth, and more particularly by the biological study of evolution:

'[The biologist] has to study evolution, and in that study there is brought home to him, more vividly than to anyone to whom the facts are not so familiar, that in spite of all appearances to the contrary there has been, throughout the whole of evolution, and most markedly in the rise of man from his pre-human forbears, a real advance, a progress.'[1]

This remarkable discovery of modern biology—that man is,

[1] *Essays of a Biologist*, by Julian Huxley, p. x.

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' in spite of all appearances to the contrary,' higher than the beasts —is of fundamental importance. For it demonstrates that there has been progress during the course of evolution—progress which, in spite of temporary reverses, has on the whole been continuously upwards. But if progress has always occurred up to the present, we have every reason to suppose that it will continue indefinitely into the future, as far as the mind can reach:

' The unbroken continuity of evolutionary direction gives us the same sort of right to believe that it will continue tomorrow and on into time as we have to believe that apples will continue to fall to the earth.'[1]

The process has so far occured in accordance with natural and immutable laws, without interference or control by any directing agency, but this will not be the case in the future. ' Nature will no longer do the work unaided.'[2] The reason for this is that man has now come on to the scene and ' evolution is handed over to him as trustee and director '[3]. (We are not told who has handed it over to him, or why.) It is therefore our duty, if we are not to let evolution down, to work wholeheartedly for the benefit of the race, and to do everything in our power to assist in its future progress. The methods to be employed for this purpose include compulsory sterilization of all who are eugenically undesirable, controlled breeding from those who are fit, compulsory limitation of families where desirable in the public interest, and so on. Judging from several rather vaguer assertions (*e.g.* ' No emotion and no sanctity must stand in the way of [science's] investigations ')[4] it would seem that the rulers in the scientific state would have unlimited power to dispose of the bodies and minds of their subjects in the interests of science or of the race, *e.g.* by vivisection and psychological experimentation. Submission to this type of regulation would provide mankind with an ideal of noble self-sacrifice which could not fail to prove an adequate substitute

[1] *Ibid*, p. 299.
[2] *Ibid*, p. xiii.
[3] *Ibid*, p. xiii.
[4] *What Dare I Think*? by Julian Huxley, p. 142.

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for our present supernatural religions. ' Who can doubt that the motive of work for the continuing race and the increase of its capacities for achievement and enjoyment could be charged with religious emotion, and so made the main conduit for the long-range moral aspirations of man.'[1]

Huxley's arguments can be analysed into assertions of fact and judgments of value. The assertions of fact are (a) that modern science has made it impossible to accept Christianity ; (b) that evolution is known to have occurred up to the present according to purely natural laws and that these laws can be controlled by us in order to produce further evolution. The judgments of value are that the improvement of the race would be a worthy object of religious enthusiasm, and that the methods proposed would be morally legitimate. These arguments must therefore be judged by two different standards—the standard of fact and the standard of value. It must be established, firstly, that this religion really receives the scientific support claimed for it, and secondly, that it would be valuable as a religion.

The question of the extent to which a scientific theory corresponds to the known facts is one which can generally be left to specialists in the field involved. The present case is an exception since the theory of evolution, on account of its important philosophical and theological implications, has generally been discussed in an atmosphere of violent prejudice on the part of supporters and opponents, with the result that essential terms are left undefined, and evidence is often invented, suppressed or distorted. The application of proper critical standards to the interpretation of evolution is therefore highly desirable, and an attempt to provide them may suitably be made in this journal. I shall not consider in detail Huxley's assertion that modern science has disproved Christianity, since this is too big a subject to be dealt with in a short space. I do not personally believe that any essential doctrine of orthodox Christianity, as taught by either the Anglican or the Roman Catholic Church is inconsistent with any known scientific facts, but I shall only attempt to justify this view in so far as the facts of evolution are supposed to conflict with Christianity.

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[1] *Ibid*, p. 266.

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II.

The theory of Evolution asserts that all living organisms are descended from one or more primitive organisms, which came into existence probably not later than several hundred millions years ago. We know nothing either about the origin of life or about the earlier stages of evolution, since the earliest surviving fossils belong in all probability to a comparatively late stage. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that the original organism or organisms were very small and simple in structure.

The theory of Natural Selection asserts that the success or failure of a given species in 'the struggle for existence' is determined entirely by natural laws, and that these laws have never been interfered with for the purpose of artificially encouraging or extinguishing any particular species.

Natural Selection does not by itself account for evolution. It does not explain how a new species evolves but merely how, after a new and more efficient species has appeared, it becomes established at the expense of less efficient ones. In order to account for the appearance of new species, Darwin postulated that the accidental variations which occur between parent and offspring, and the variations which are produced by the action of the environment on an organism, tend to be inherited to some extent by subsequent generations. The more favourable variations continually become more widely diffused, as a result of National Selection, until they in turn are displaced by still more favourable ones. This additive process continues until a type of organism has been produced which differs radically from that from which it started.

Darwin's theory has had to be considerably modified as a result of later discoveries. Variations due to the action of the environment are now generally considered not to be inherited at all, or only in very exceptional cases. Other variations within a species are only inherited to a strictly limited extent. Broadly speaking there are within each species a number of definite characteristics, such as eye and hair colour, large or small stature, etc., which are inherited in accordance with the genetical laws discovered by Mendel. Natural or artificial selection can eliminate undesirable hereditary characters, and can encourage desirable ones,

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but it cannot produce new ones.[1] The most that can be done by selection is to produce within the species a ' pure line.' This is a strain, all the members of which have precisely the same hereditary characters. Once a pure line has been established, naturally or artificially, selection alone will not produce any further change, however many generations it may be continued for. Casual variation will still occur between parent and offspring, but these will not be inherited by subsequent generations.

Genuine evolutionary progress only occurs when a ' mutation ' arises. A mutation is an abrupt change consisting in the appearance, in an organism, of a new hereditary character (*e.g.* a new eye-colour, or a structural modification in some organ) which was not possessed by either parent or by any of their ancestors, but which is passed on to a certain proportion of its offspring in accordance with the laws of heredity. In most species, mutations arise exceedingly rarely, but in some they are sufficiently common to be observed and studied in the laboratory. The overwhelming majority of the observed mutations are either useless or harmful, and we know nothing about the conditions under which biologically progressive[2] ones have arisen.

The theory which I shall call Natural Mutation asserts that all mutations have arisen as a result of the operation of natural laws, without purposive direction.

The theory which is generally known as Darwinism, but which I prefer to call Natural Evolution, asserts that both selection and mutation have been natural throughout the whole of evolution, *i.e.* that the laws of nature have never been suspended or modified in any way for the purpose of producing organisms which would not otherwise have occured. This is in opposition to the various

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[1]This is not strictly accurate. A limited number of new hereditary characters can sometimes be produced by suitable cross-breeding, but these cannot account for more than a small fraction of the total evolutionary process.

[2]It is difficult to define this term satisfactorily. I am using it primarily to denote the series of mutations by means of which man has evolved from the original living organism, as well as for any further mutations which may produce still higher creatures in the future.

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theories of emergent evolution which postulate a controlling purpose within nature, as well as to the view held by many Catholic apologists, that the process was directed by means of occasional miracles.

The scientific evidence in favour of some form of evolution is overwhelming, and is universally accepted by biologists. There is also very good evidence that natural selection has played an important part in determining the survival and extinction of species. Our knowledge of the process of evolution is much too incomplete to justify any dogmatic assertion that it has been the only selective agency, although this can reasonably be accepted as a working hypothesis. The theory of natural mutation is in a different category. Nothing at all is known at present concerning the causes of biologically progressive mutations ; hence there is no evidence to show that they have arisen naturally. It is quite legitimate to believe in natural mutation, as Huxley does, but the belief must be accepted on faith rather than on the strength of any scientific facts. J. B. S. Haldane, who is one of the most brilliant supporters of natural evolution, has, so far as I am aware, confined his scientific arguments to establishing the possibility of natural selection, and has only produced a philosophical argument in favour of natural selection. He considers that if an omnipotent and intelligent Creator had directed evolution, He would have done it differently.

Huxley has advanced an argument in favour of natural mutation which, although completely worthless, may be mentioned here for the sake of completeness. This is that the laws of nature have been shown by science to be necessary and immutable, and hence that interference by means of miracles is impossible. ' The immutability of the fundamental laws of matter and motion . . . make it impossible to think of occasional interference by God with this world's affairs.'[1] ' Things work as they do . . . not because they are guided from without, but because they happen to be so made that they cannot work in any other way.'[2] ' And the laws governing the evolution of life seem to be as regular and automatic as those governing the movements of the planets.'[3]

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[1] *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 218.

[2] *Science and Religion* (a B.B.C. symposium, with a contribution by Julian Huxley) p. 15.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 15.

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The first of these three assertions simply begs the question. There is no *a priori* reason to suppose that the laws of nature are immutable. They could only be so if in fact God (or any other agency) had never interfered with them. Until we know definitely that He has not done so, even on one single occasion, we have no right to assert that they are immutable. Huxley himself obviously believes intuitively that they are, but he should have made this clear. As it is, the unsuspecting reader might conclude, wrongly, that there was some scientific basis for the assertion. The scientist can show that the laws of nature do not vary under normal conditions, but this is irrelevant to the question of what may have occurred in exceptional, non-recurrent situations such as must have arisen during the course of evolution.

The second assertion is also unjustified. From the scientific point of view we do not know why things work as they do. The scientist only describes, and does not explain, the laws of nature. For example, the movements of bodies in space and time can be described by means of a particular set of mathematical equations, but these equations would be equally applicable whether the bodies moved in the given paths from internal necessity, or because they were guided in these same paths from without. It is most unfortunate that a scientist who undertakes to instruct vast audiences[1] on the philosophy of the sciences should be ignorant of the elementary principles of his subject.

The third assertion has already been discussed. The laws governing the evolution (as opposed to the mere selection) of organisms are still unknown. If they seem to be ' regular and automatic ' this can only be to the eye of faith—an organ which is very highly developed in Huxley.

The theory of natural selection is open to a certain number of positive objections which, taken together, are serious but not necessarily fatal. They have for the most part been very fairly stated by Professor Haldane, whose semi-popular book on the subject[2] is an admirably well-balanced presentation of the Darwinian point of view. It is quite possible that they will disappear as

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[1]The quotation is taken from an address broadcasted by Julian Huxley from the B.B.C.

[2]*The Causes of Evolution.* Longman, 1932.

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our knowledge increases. The present position may be summarized as follows: (1) the evidence in favour of evolution of some sort is as nearly as possible conclusive; (2) natural selection has certainly played an important part in determining the success or failure of species, and may have been the only selective agency; (3) it is possible that all mutations have arisen naturally, but there is no positive reason for supposing this to be the case, and there are some phenomena which cannot yet be explained on this theory.

Two more points must be considered. (1) A small but important distinction must be made between Natural and Accidental Evolution. The former implies simply that evolution has occurred according to unvarying natural laws; the latter that the process is determined by 'blind' forces and is not purposed. There is a tendency among scientists, and even among theologians, to suppose that the one implies the other, but this is a mistake. If the universe was created and is controlled by God, there is no reason why He should not work through fixed laws, provided those laws are adequate to bring about the desired end. It is almost inconceivable that a Creator, having created a world governed by laws which would have led to evolution in any case, should proceed to interfere with the workings of these laws simply in order to bring about the same end miraculously. If natural evolution is possible there is a strong presumption that it has actually occurred, irrespective of whether the universe was designed or not.

(2) The theory of natural evolution is (or should be) concerned only with the physical evolution of organisms. If it is true it explains how, granted the general phenomenon of life, a human body could be produced by natural laws. But it can offer no explanation of the way in which consciousness, reason, etc., appeared at different stages of the process. This point is important with respect to the Christian doctrine that man differs from the rest of the animal creation in having an immortal soul. This doctrine requires that the transition from animal to man should have been, from the spiritual point of view, an abrupt one, since there can be no gradual change from temporary to eternal existence. According to Wells and Huxley, however, the change is known to have been a gradual one, in which the gap between true

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man and true animal was bridged by a whole series of semi-human creatures approaching more and more nearly to man as he exists to-day. They conclude that man is essentially continuous with the rest of nature, and differs from the other animals in degree only, not in kind. This argument is invalid on two grounds. Firstly it is irrelevant. The soul is not a physical organ and cannot be identified by biological methods. There is no essential reason why the transition from a man-like animal without an immortal soul to a human being with one should have been accompanied by a big physical change. It might have occurred at any apparently arbitrary point in the physical progress. Secondly the argument is unsupported by the facts. We know practically nothing about the way in which the transition from animal to man occurred, nor whether it was gradual or sudden. No undoubted semi-human or non-human ancestors of modern man have yet been discovered. Most, and possibly all, of the so-called ' missing links ' between man and the animals which are known are now generally believed not to be true ancestors at all, but collateral branches which became extinct without leaving descendants.

Haldane and Huxley explain the appearance of life and mind on the assumption that mental and spiritual qualities really exist in a latent form throughout all nature, including inorganic matter, and that they merely emerge in the course of evolution. This is an *ad hoc* hypothesis which, from the scientific point of view, has little to commend it except the fact that it would provide some sort of explanation if it were true. Nobody has yet succeeded in detecting latent mental or spiritual qualities in inorganic matter. Until this has been done, the hypothesis cannot be considered as a scientific explanation. Huxley's argument is worth quoting:

' But there can be no reasonable doubt that living matter, in due process of time, originated from non-living ; and if that be so, we must . . . believe that not only living matter, but all matter, is associated with something of the same general description as mind in higher animals.'[1]

This passage is typical of its author's methods of reasoning. The first part of it is ambiguous. It might merely mean that

[1] *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 242-3.

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the material composing the first living organism had previously existed as non-living matter, in which case it is a comparatively unimportant assertion which proves nothing and does not justify the conclusion drawn from it. Or it might mean, as it is evidently intended to mean, that the first organism originated, beyond reasonable doubt, by a purely natural process from non-living matter, in which case the assertion is entirely unjustified, and is not supported by any scientific evidence at all. We do not know how the complex substances which are necessary even to the simplest forms of life could have been produced under natural conditions (although several rather fantastic guesses have been made), nor do we know whether, when these substances had been suitably combined, the product would have been alive. Huxley has repeatedly asserted or implied in his popular writings that there are good scientific reasons for believing that life arose naturally on earth. It is therefore necessary to emphasize the fact that the supposed evidence to which he appeals simply does not exist. He appears to suffer, even more acutely than most popular scientists, from an inability to distinguish facts which have already been discovered from facts which he hopes will be discovered in the future.

Thus, the final conclusions of the foregoing discussion are, (a) the theory of natural evolution is far from being scientifically established ; (b) even if it is true, it is quite consistent with Christian theism ; (c) it only accounts for physical evolution, and throws no light on the origin of life, mind or soul.

We are now in a position to apply these conclusions to the positive aspects of the religion of progress, and particularly to the question whether a substantial improvement of the race is possible in the light of present knowledge, or of knowledge likely to be obtained in the reasonably near future. The two methods by which evolutionary progress is brought about are (a) the selection and encouragement of desirable hereditary characters and the elimination of undesirable ones, and (b) the production of new hereditary characters. The second method is entirely beyond our control at present, and there are no positive reasons for supposing that it will ever be possible in the future. The first, however, would be practicable to some extent. We know that a few rare diseases and physical deformities are inherited, and that if we

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sterilized or segregated everybody who suffered from these or was suspected of being a 'carrier' of one of them we could greatly reduce their incidence. A certain amount of mental deficiency is also known to be inherited, although the actual proportion is still very doubtful. We could certainly reduce it to some extent by sufficiently intensive sterilization, but perhaps not very much. Among more normal characteristics, a great number of physical qualities such as eye, skin and hair colour, stature, shape of skull and of features, resistance to disease, etc., can be inherited to a greater or less extent, although in many cases the factors involved are so complex that they have not yet been fully unravelled. There is also good evidence that intelligence is partially inheritable. In this case, however, the problem is complicated by the fact that intellectual capacity cannot be measured until some time after birth, and may have been modified to an unknown extent by environment during infancy.

The available evidence on human inheritance justifies the conclusion that a policy of controlled breeding, carried on for a number of generations, could reduce a few diseases very considerably and could raise the average level of physical health and general intelligence to some extent. It could also determine the less important physical characteristics and produce, say, a race which was predominately blonde, blue-eyed and snub-nosed, if this happened to be thought desirable. But there is no evidence at all that the higher levels of human experience—intellectual, aesthetic or spiritual—could be raised or made more generally available. It is necessary to be on one's guard against extravagant assertions such as the following, by Professor Haldane:

'In the rather improbable event of man taking his own evolution in hand—in other words of improving human nature, as opposed to environment—I can see no bounds at all to his progress. Less than a million years hence the average man or woman will realize all the possibilities that human life has so far shown. He or she will never know a minute's illness. He will be able to think like Newton, to write like Racine, to paint like the von Eyks, to compose like Bach. He will be as incapable of hatred as St. Francis, and when death comes at the end of a life probably measured in thousands of years he will meet it with as little fear as Captain Oates or Arnold von Winkelried. And every

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minute of his life will be lived with all the passion of a lover or a discoverer. We can form no idea whatever of the exceptional men of such a future.'[1]

It is not often that Haldane lays himself open to the charge of calculated irresponsibility, but this instance is too glaring to be overlooked. When one of our leading scientific authorities makes definite pronouncements of this sort on his own subject we should be justified in expecting that they should have some factual basis. But not a single one of these assertions has any scientific foundation at all. There is no evidence to show that intellectual or artistic genius, or hatred, or fear of death are caused by inheritable factors which could be controlled by artificial selection, nor that mutations could ever be produced in the future which would increase human life by thousands of years, or enable every moment of it to be lived with the passion of a lover.

An argument in support of the possibility of future evolution, to which Huxley apparently attaches considerable importance, is that evolution has always occurred in the past and therefore will always continue to occur in the future (*cf.* the quotation on p. 269). This is no more convincing than to argue that because a human being increases continuously in height during the first sixteen years of his life he will continue to do so for ever, and will eventually become infinitely tall. We can only argue from the past to the future in this way if we have reason to believe that the conditions which made the process possible in the past will continue to operate in the future. We know nothing of the causes which formerly produced biologically progressive mutations ; hence we cannot know how much longer, if at all, they will continue to operate. It is evident, therefore, that however noble and desirable the religion of progress may be, it will have to be accepted principally on faith—at least for the present. The claim that it differs from Christianity and all other religions in resting on a basis of scientific fact is one which cannot be substantiated. We can proceed to compare it with Christianity strictly on its merits, without being open to the charge of ignoring any known facts.

III.

The religion of progress would involve a complete breach with

[1] *The Inequality of Man*, by J. B. S. Haldane, p 146.

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our present standards of value, and would set up entirely new ones in their place. This point cannot be considered in detail here, but a brief outline will be sufficient to show the importance of the issues involved. Discussion of this, as of any important question, is rendered difficult by the vagueness and irrationality of the standards of value accepted by ordinary educated people to-day. It will be necessary to leave these on one side and to go back to the true European tradition for a basis of comparison. This tradition is primarily a Christian one. It developed during the Dark Ages and Middle Ages, and received its completest intellectual formulation from St. Thomas Aquinas. It consciously regulated the social order in most parts of Europe during the Middle Ages with varying but sometimes considerable success. It has continued to influence the political and social structure even in communities in which the doctrines on which it is based are disbelieved or ignored.

The fundamental doctrine from which it derives is that every man has an immortal soul, whose eternal destiny is decided to some extent by his behaviour in this world. All men stand to God in the relation of children to a loving and omnipotent father. Therefore every man is infinitely important in comparison with all earthly things and should always be looked upon as an end in himself—never as a mere means to some other end. All men are equally valuable in God's eyes ; we have no right to divide them into different categories, some of them intrinsically more important and valuable than others, *e.g.* free men and slaves, Aryans and non-Aryans, or normal and feeble-minded. All men have certain fundamental rights and duties, chief among which is the right and duty to live the highest life of which they are capable, and to help others to do the same. The highest possible life is that which leads to the completest and most harmonious development of the whole personality, in preparation for the life to come. It will of course vary from one person to another, according to their circumstances and natural capacities, but it has certain features common to all. Its fundamental characteristic is that it must be natural, *i.e.* it must be in harmony with the laws of man's own nature. Anything which is unnatural, which leads to frustration or spiritual discord, is to be avoided. For this reason, for example, birth control is condemned. The proper

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function of the sexual act is procreation. The artificial separation of the two is, even in the strictest biological sense, unnatural, and entails a divorce between function and use which would make a completely harmonious life impossible. Sterilization, which is a permanent mutilation of the body, is from the same point of view even more unnatural, and is moreover irremediable. Compulsory sterilization involves much worse evils since it gives to the State, or to a class of men within the State (doctors, government officials, etc.), the power of compelling people to submit to mutilation. This power of mutilation constitutes a return to the worst features of chattel slavery, since the State effectively claims absolute proprietorship of the bodies of its citizens, to dispose of to its own advantage. The claim that these bodies may be mutilated on the altars of a particular state religion, such as the forms of race-worship preached by Hitler and Huxley, is further condemned as a reversion to the principle of human sacrifice. The fact that the State would direct its powers specifically against the weakest and most defenceless sections of the populace is a further reason for their condemnation by Christianity.

The religion of progress also conflicts at other points with the Christian tradition. It asserts that the race, and not the individual, is the supremely important unit. The individual is looked upon primarily as a mere instrument for the propagation or improvement of the race, not as an end in himself. It denies that all men are equally valuable, and asserts that those who are more healthy, intelligent or beautiful, are more valuable than the others, since they contribute more to the improvement of the race. Consequently it justifies the sacrificing of the weak (using this term in a wide sense) in order that these qualities may be spread more widely. Christianity naturally does not deny that such qualities are highly desirable in so far as they make a higher and more satisfactory life possible, but it denies that they increase the value of the possessor, although it emphasizes the fact that they increase his responsibilities in making the best use of his life, and in helping those who are less highly gifted to do the same with theirs. It denies him the right to use his talents to oppress the weak for his own advantage, or for that of his descendants.

In one respect the scale of values of the religion of progress would have appeared wildly abnormal in almost any type of

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society in the past. For, according to the normally accepted human values, our most important duties are those to our contemporaries and children. Our duties to our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and so on, become progressively more and more remote and ought not to take precedence over our more immediate ones to living men and women. The religion of progress, on the other hand, requires that we should attach greater importance to the welfare of our remotest descendants millions of years hence than to that of our neighbours and children. This extraordinary inversion appears to spring from two psychological causes: (i) The concept of the human race as a sort of mystical unity extending throughout time offers a vicarious immortality to those who are unable to believe in personal survival after death. The satisfaction to be derived from this idea is limited, however, by the fact that eventually all life within the universe will probably become extinct. (ii) The profound and pessimistic contempt with which many intellectuals regard ordinary men and women would make life insupportable for them unless they could look forward to a golden age in the future, in which human vice and pettiness shall have disappeared. This attitude seems to me to characterize the writings of all the evolutionists, although Huxley appears to be freer from it than Wells, Haldane and Bertrand Russell. Haldane, for instance, after giving reasons for doubting whether mankind will in fact evolve any further in the future, concludes: 'If that is the case we are perhaps the rather sorry climax of evolution, and less can be said in favour of existence than many of us suppose.'[1]

It seems clear that the difference between the values of Christianity and those of the religion of progress are inherent and irreconcilable. The choice between them, or (since the various forms of state-worship, such as Communism and Fascism, are based on values closely related to those of the religion of progress) a very similar choice, is likely to face most people in the near future, and its implications ought to be recognized. The main intention of this essay has been to clear the ground for such a decision.

J. L. RUSSELL.

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[1] *The Causes of Evolution*, by J. B. S. Haldane, p. 167.

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CORRESPONDENCE

To

THE EDITORS OF 'SCRUTINY.'

Mr. H. A. Mason's Review of 'Superman,' edited by Ephraim Pundit (Constable & Co.).

Sirs,

My attention has been called to the above review in the September issue of your journal, and as the actual author of '*Superman*, the Collected Poems of Robert Baby Buntin-Dicebat, edited by Ephraim Pundit' (Constable & Co.), I deeply regret that your reviewer, in offensive terms, should assert that *Superman* is written by Mr. John Sparrow, author of *Sense and Poetry*, Mr. John Sparrow is *not* the author of *Superman*, nor was he acquainted with me or aware that I existed. He had no part or lot in the writing of *Superman* therefore and did not even know that such a work was in contemplation. I cannot understand why Mr. Mason should be so certain about the authorship or why he should be so unpleasant in his remarks concerning it. Such scorn and fierceness is surely a little overdone?

I wrote *Superman* in all good faith. I was angry, scornful and indignant with Ezra Pound and his school of so-called Active Poets and their Active Anthology. I care passionately for English poetry, so much that I hate to see poetasters flaunting their rubbish in the face of the public.

I wrote with my models before me. There was no coarseness, no piece of impudence, no foolishness, in my satires, which is not to be matched or even surpassed, in the verse of my models.

I should have thought that a critic in *Scrutiny*, caring for the dignity and sincerity of English Letters, would feel that the author of *Superman* cared for these things too, and was only in a mood of outraged affection for his loves, forced to dip his pen in vitriol. I should have thought moreover that such a critic would have been most careful to read the book reviewed with the

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greatest care, and compare the poems in it with the thing criticized. The impression given by Mr. Mason's review is that he has not done this.

I ask any unbiassed person of competent mind to take my *Superman* and *The Active Anthology* and look at the following examples:

Active Anthology	pp. 32-33,	compare	*Superman*	p.26.	
,,	,, p. 90	,,	,,	pp. 14 & 59	
,,	,, p. 41	,,	,,	p. 33	
,,	,, p. 45	,,	,,	p. 25	
,,	,, p. 108	,,	,,	p. 35	
,,	,, p. 111	,,	,,	p. 63	
,,	,, pp. 227-228	,,	,,	p. 51	
,,	,, pp. 9-27	,,	,,	pp. 11-14	
,,	,, note on page 255 (acknowledgments)	,,	,,	note on page 81	

and then agree that Mr. Mason's review is most unfair to *Superman*, inasmuch as it gives an entirely false impression of the book and of its purpose.

I say nothing of the actual course of English satire. Are not Skelton, Donne, Butler the first, Swift and Byron, all coarse? I do not pretend for a moment that I am even worthy to lace up their shoes, but I do suggest that in order to satirize vulgarity I am entitled to be coarse. In fact, I do not see otherwise how I could laugh the modern poetasters out of court.

Now if *The Church Times* or *The Sunday Express* reviewed me in the terms of Mr. Mason I should merely laugh, but that a reviewer in *Scrutiny*, one of the few places where I expected understanding, should so misunderstand *Superman* and grossly insult Mr. John Sparrow in the process of attempting to insult me, is matter for sorrow.

I have long held that much contemporary reviewing is little short of a scandal! written by ignorant young men and women up from the Universities with little knowledge of either life or letters. It is coterie in tone, prejudiced in manner, or the mere log-rolling of friends. Hitherto I had excepted *Scrutiny* from this indictment, I regret to state that it is no longer possible to do so.

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Mr. Mason should think again and I hope that as is sometimes the case with poets, his second thoughts will be better than his first.

Yours sincerely,

EPHRAIM PUNDIT,
' The onlie Begetter ' of *Superman*.

14. 9. 34.

To

THE EDITORS OF ' SCRUTINY.'

Sirs,

My attention has been called to the following passage in a recent number of *Scrutiny*:

> ' *SUPERMAN, edited by Ephraim Pundit (Constable, 2/6).*
>
> ' *Superman* comes from the latter camp. " Ephraim Pundit "—who is no other than Mr. (*Sense and Poetry*) Sparrow—is provoked by Mr. Pound's manner and the inclusion of so many worthless disciples in *Active Anthology*, and his *indignatio* has taken the traditional course. The level of humour and coarseness (which would disgrace a fourth form) is incredible, and if taken along with the passages on Pound in the " lively little book which should help to bring reason, order, and imagination back into poetry again " (Robert Lynd), these " poems " demonstrate (if it is still necessary) just how incapable Mr. Sparrow is of understanding Mr. Pound's best work. They demonstrate a great deal more about Mr. Sparrow, but not the sort of thing that could be mentioned in a review.'

This occurs in a review signed ' H. A. Mason.'

I think I am right in saying that these words convey

(1) that I have published a coarse piece of writing.
(2) that my level of humour would disgrace a fourth form,
(3) that I have certain characteristics of a kind not fit to be mentioned in a review,
(4) that I wrote *Superman*.

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Scrutiny (like the fourth form) evidently has its own standard of manners, so I do not comment upon (3), though it is an insinuation which I should not myself make against any opponent in controversy ; and, attaching little importance to the views expressed in *Scrutiny* about myself, I have no objection to (1) or (2) in themselves. It is with (4), the statement that I wrote *Superman*, that I quarrel, the more because (1), (2) and (3) are evidently based upon it.

It may surprise those readers who trust your accuracy and honesty to learn that I did not write *Superman*, that I had neither seen nor heard of *Superman* till a friend sent me a copy of it ; that I did not then know who wrote it ; and that its author, when revealed to me, proved to be someone whom I had neither seen nor spoken to in the course of my life.

I think I am right in saying that your review was well calculated to mislead readers on these points.

Your procedure has, in fact, been reckless to a degree which I think few responsible editors would care to own to. You print unpleasant insinuations without troubling to make certain whether the object of your attack did or did not write the book which evoked them, and you state that the book is his without suggesting the possibility of a doubt.

I hope that neither you nor the reviewer will trouble to insert a formal apology: obviously you will be sorry that your recklessness has been exposed, and obviously you will be sorry that I did not write *Superman*, and it would give me no satisfaction to see these sentiments in print in any form. I write merely to correct the false impression of fact which must have been given to your readers by the untruth you published. I hope that a belated sense of decency will impel you to print this letter in a prominent place, without any alteration or omission.

I am, Sirs,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN SPARROW.

3, PUMP COURT,
TEMPLE, E.C.4.

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Our sincerest apologies are due, and are offered, to Mr. Sparrow and to ' Ephraim Pundit.' In justice to our reviewer and to ourselves we have to add that the ' recklessness ' that produced the deplorable mistake was, if still censurable, not as completely and criminally wanton as it appears to Mr. Sparrow. Both our reviewer and ourselves had independently formed the impression that the book was *meant* to be understood as being by the author of *Sense and Poetry*. That the possibility of the mistaken impression had occurred to others is suggested by an alteration revealed in a comparison between the review-copy of *Superman* and a copy that we obtained later. In the review copy the page opposite the title—the usual page for listing other works of the author—contained a notice of *Sense and Poetry*, headed by the injunctions: ' Laugh with Pundit! Learn with Sparrow!' It certainly looked as if ' Ephraim Pundit ' were meant to be, not a disguise, but merely a part of the parody, Mr. Sparrow being archly indicated as the author. In the later copy the injunctions had been omitted.

This is not intended as an exculpation. We should, however, in repeating our apologies, like to say that editing *Scrutiny* ought to be a full-time business for someone, but, the Editors being unavoidably occupied with other things, isn't. As for the animus against him that Mr. Sparrow would seem to impute to us, we think that if he looks up the review of his book that appeared in our March number, he will agree that there are no grounds for such an imputation.

THE EDITORS.

THE EDITORS, ' SCRUTINY,' CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Sirs,

I should like to thank you for this opportunity of correcting some erroneous impressions made by Mr. Mirsky in his review of *Soviet Literature* in your last issue.

Mr. Mirsky's review is grossly unfair and does more justice to his temperament than to his critical sense. Not only is he prepared to allow less credit to this anthology than other soviet reviewers, but he seems out to damn it at all costs. But those familiar with Mr. Mirsky's often contradictory pronouncements

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and partiality will treat his ' critical judgments ' with the greatest reserve, especially when it is manifest that he has a personal axe to grind. But now I must deal briefly with some of Mr. Mirsky's assertions about *Soviet Literature*. These are that *Soviet Literature* is worthless because the texts were selected with a view to giving a ' distorted ' picture of soviet literature and that the translations by me are without exception bad. Mr. Mirsky also makes several personal imputations against both Mr. Slonim and myself.

Any anthology invites criticism and Mr. Mirsky is entitled to his prejudices, but his sweeping condemnation is unfounded in the light either of the editors' aim, or of the texts selected, or of the translations thereof. The avowed aim of the editors was to provide a convenient panorama of the development of Russian literature since 1917 and not merely to paint a red picture of the proletarian or communist elements in that literature. It was in the order of things therefore to include some of the mystics who were prominent in the earlier phases of the Revolution as well as certain writers of a more independent character. But this was not done (and Mr. Mirsky cannot really prove it) to the detriment of the proletarian or collective type of literature, to which by far the longest prose section in this anthology was exclusively devoted. The inclusion then of Biely, a remarkable writer ignored by the rest of Europe, and whose prose had an undoubted influence upon the formal experiments of the earlier phase, and that of Remizov, who reacts mystically to the Revolution, seems not only fully justifiable but also of great documentary interest. As these writers are given as the ' stylistic precursors ' of the early phase, and it is nowhere implied that they are the foundation of soviet literature as a whole, Mr. Mirsky would seem to have missed not only the aim of this anthology, but also the subtle chronological order upon which it is constructed ; for, passing by a variety of earlier manifestations which still have their echo to-day, the reader is finally introduced to the collective ideology of the Proletarian and Five Year Plan section. Mr. Mirsky thus labels as ' distortion ' what was really an attempt at a fair appraisal of the variety of elements going to make up what is termed ' soviet literature.' He himself obviously would have been much less fair.

Mr. Mirsky makes a great fuss about the non-inclusion of Gorky. Far from denying his importance, it was the editors'

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original intention to include this ' father of proletarian literature.' His omission is due principally to the fact that the anthology had in the end to be cut down owing to limitations of space. Gorky was sacrificed in favour of some of the younger and lesser known writers because it was thought that, as the most widely translated of modern Russian writers, he would be the best known and the least in need of introduction to the English public. But every care was taken to stress his importance in the preface and various biographical notes and, besides, two prose texts by Beziemensky and Lunacharsky respectively were put in specially for his benefit. The same applies to Tolstoy (and my publisher will corroborate that translations of him as well as of several other writers were not included at the last moment). And, finally, as excuses were made for the non-inclusion of all the writers mentioned by Mr. Mirsky, it is patent that their non-inclusion was not due to any desire for ' distortion ' as Mr. Mirsky suggests.

No less astonishing are Mr. Mirsky's conclusions about my translations. He charges me with mistranslating (ignorantly) ' strokes of tower clocks 'by ' battle of towers.' I can only plead a justifiable poetic license. Tsvetaeva's poem opens with the line ' Boy bashen ' : excited as I was by this poem, I got a precise visual image from the passage ; I saw the booming towers of the Kremlin in an expressionist perspective or looming up to an excited mind like a battle. The whole atmosphere of the poem, the tense atmosphere of conflict of the first revolutionary years, seemed caught in an image, and I thought myself perfectly within my rights to translate this atmosphere ; and in making the towers ' battle ' instead of boom, I had the illusion of gaining in directness as well as atmosphere. This type of transliteration I frequently employ in my own poems as witness *Faust's Metamorphoses*. Mr. Mirsky may not like this procedure ; but then he should not jump to conclusions too quickly and talk of ' howlers.' Tsvetaeva, I may add, considers this a possible version. The same applies to Pasternak, who thought very highly of my translations of his poems. Nor do I think that any competent person who reads my translation of the Blok by the side of the original, or any of the other poems, will endorse Mr. Mirsky's statement that these translations are ' helpless attempts.'

I should like nothing better than to deal with every point of

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Mr. Mirsky's at length, but I have been asked to be brief and I shall not take up any more of your valuable space. I shall repeat in conclusion that Mr. Mirsky exaggerates ; that not only are his generalizations as to the intention, composition and rendering of this anthology unfounded, but that his statement that Mr. Slonim is ' an enemy of soviet literature ' is utterly fantastic. Not so long ago Mr. Mirsky contributed to a review edited by Mr. Slonim and spoke at gatherings presided by him. At one of these meetings Mr. Mirsky declared that one line of Fadeyev was worth more than the whole of Bunin put together. In a recent article in a soviet literary journal, Mr. Mirsky attacked the same Fadeyev. Mr. Mirsky has attacked and praised Tsvetaeva in turn. Mr. Mirsky will apparently attack or praise anyone when the humour suits him. It would not surprise me to see him change his opinion about Gorky very soon. But surely such temperamental reaction or political design cannot inspire any deep-rooted confidence in his infallibility as a critic. A little misplaced, too, is Mr. Mirsky's ' judgment ' of me as ' an ambitious but not over-talented undergraduate.' Apart from the doubtful value of such an imaginative statement, it would seem to cast some aspersion on the status of undergraduate at the University from which I had the honour of graduating. But this is doubtlessly but another example of Mr. Mirsky's bad taste. His talents would, I think, be better and more fruitfully employed in correcting the blunders so often perpetrated by soviet translators.

I am, dear Sirs,

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE REAVEY.

Paris, 5th November, 1934.

To

THE EDITORS OF ' SCRUTINY.'

Sirs,

Owing, doubtless, to pressure of space you have not previously opened your pages to correspondence. My distance from books, except those in my own library, may however excuse the disjointed form of this communication.

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When reading the analysis of Sonnet 121 in Mr. Knights's admirable article on Shakespeare's Sonnets I was very disappointed to find that he dismissed lines 5-6 with: 'straightforward—"give salutation" means "have effect on."' I have always considered these two lines to be the most difficult in the sonnet. Taking 'for why' as meaning 'why,' I offer very tentatively the following interpretation: 'Why should I allow the jaundiced and corrupt judgments of others to incite my lively blood to further action (in reprisal)?—action which would be again misconstrued, because of the false standard of values held by such people.'

Mr. Knights's analysis of the sonnet (substantially that of T. G. Tucker) is not much affected by my reading of the lines, but both Mr. Knights and Professor Tucker, as well as all the other commentators that I can lay my hands on, seem to have missed the full force of 'give salutation.' It must, in any case, I think, have the active meaning of 'stir' and cannot bear the passive meaning of 'have effect on.' The paraphrase that I have given, with the stress on incitement to *further* action, has an important bearing on 'I am that I am.'

My second point is more serious and, were I in reach of a decently furnished library, might well have been expanded into a short paper. Mr. Knights makes two statements that I should like to examine. First that '"the problem of Time" is a metaphysical problem, and in various forms it is a preoccupation of many of the Metaphysical Poets'; and second that 'Shakespeare is concerned merely with the *effects* of time' and that experiences do not 'arouse speculation in his mind.' The first conclusion is closely bound up with Mr. James Smith's definition of Metaphysical Poetry. The hints thrown out by T. S. Eliot on the nature of the true metaphysical conceit were elaborated by George Williamson in *The Donne Tradition* and *Donne and the Poetry of To-day*, and they have now been successfully clinched by Mr. Smith. Few would wish to quarrel with Mr. Smith's emphasis on the 'high strain or tension, due to the sharpness with which its elements are opposed.' But I hesitate to follow him when he sums up metaphysical poetry as poetry 'to which the impulse is given by an overwhelming concern with metaphysical problems; with problems either deriving from, or closely resembling in the nature of their difficulty, the problem of the Many and the One.'

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Let us return to Mr. Knights and compare with two sonnets of Shakespeare Marvell's *To his Coy Mistress*, by general consent a metaphysical poem and one that is closely concerned with Time. In the final quatrains of Sonnets 64 and 65 I find definite 'speculations' on the problem of Time. There is certainly no resolution. Sonnet 64 ends with a humanistic complaint and Sonnet 65 with a common sonneteering device; but where is the metaphysical resolution in the *Coy Mistress*? In Marvell's poem there is a situation in time expounded and a course of action proposed. There is no more speculation about Time than in either of the Shakespeare Sonnets. The poem is rich in magnificent metaphysical conceits; it even glances at such intricacies as the relative speed of the passage of time at different periods; yet I do not see that, through these things, it resolves 'the metaphysical problem of Time.' The problem of Time in the *Coy Mistress* is, indeed, a physical and not a metaphysical one; the metaphysical problems of Time are subsumed in an ethical problem of conduct. The culmination of the *Coy Mistress* is in the difficult lines:

> Let us roll all our Strength, and all
> Our sweetness, up into one Ball:
> And tear our Pleasures with rough strife,
> Through the Iron gates of Life.

But however we may interpret this tough thinking and imagery the result must be some aspect of a problem of action.

I cannot, finally, agree with Mr. Knights that the metaphysical problem of Time is 'a preoccupation of many of the Metaphysical Poets.' Donne is, of course, easily the best support for Mr. Knights's contention, as he is for Mr. Smith's definition. Donne frequently uses a philosophical approach to Time, but he rarely concerns himself with Time alone, and in very few of his poems can I recall a thorough preoccupation with its metaphysical aspects. Donne almost always combines the problems of Time with those of Space and it is in his treatment of Space that he is most whole-heartedly metaphysical in Mr. Smith's sense. But of Marvell's important poems (outside those specifically concerned with soul and body) I can fit only *The Garden* and *The Definition of Love* into Mr. Smith's definition, and if we press this definition

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to its narrow limits we must conclude that *To his Coy Mistress* is not a metaphysical poem at all.

I have not forgotten Mr. James Smith's remark that a metaphysical poet need have 'nothing or very little to do with metaphysical propositions,' and he may well reply that I am attacking not his definition, but Mr. Knights's expansion and application of it. Should he do so I shall cry *touché* at once.

This carping and desultory treatment of two excellent essays will have its justification if it induces Mr. Knights to clarify his position.

I am, Sirs,

Very sincerely yours,

RONALD BOTTRALL.

RAFFLES COLLEGE,
SINGAPORE.
October 3rd, 1934.

The Editors hope to publish replies to Mr. Bottrall in the next number.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

EX CATHEDRA.

To judge by anxious and indignant letters that we receive, it will not be altogether superfluous to remind readers that contributors who appear in *Scrutiny* do not necessarily subscribe to *Scrutiny* policy, and that the views expressed by contributors are not necessarily shared by the Editors. For instance, when we have a *Soviet Anthology* reviewed by a distinguished Marxist it does not mean that *Scrutiny* has 'gone over' to Communism—any more than (to make a different point) a favourable editorial reference to Mr. Christopher Dawson implies leanings towards Catholicism. We remain explicitly not Marxist, just as we remain

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explicitly dissentient from the Christian position as formulated in an essay in the current number. Our own point-of-view in these matters has been indicated, and more will be said about it from time to time. But the function of *Scrutiny*, as we see it, is not merely to present a particular point-of-view.

THE EDITORS.

'WHAT IS TRUTH?'

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BACKGROUND: Studies in the Thought and Of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion, by Basil Willey (Chatto and Windus, 1934).

Mr. Willey's book has itself, one gathers, a background in the work of Dr. I. A. Richards and Mr. C. K. Ogden, but a reviewer who will not pretend to have mastered entirely the meaning of the *Meaning of Meaning* must be allowed to approach a consideration of the interesting questions raised by Mr. Willey's studies in his own way. The book covers some familiar ground, but with an object of its own. Its main theme is the effects of the remarkable achievements of the new experimental, inductive sciences on the thought of the age, and the effect of the changes in thought induced thereby on the feelings and imagination as these seek satisfaction and expression in religion and poetry. 'Of high poetry,' Maeterlinck has said, 'the constituents are three-fold: beauty of language; the passionate portrayal of what is real around us, nature and our own feelings; and, enveloping the whole, creating its peculiar atmosphere, the idea that the poet forms to himself of the unknown, in which floats the being he invokes, the mystery which dominates and judges them, which presides over and assigns their destinies.' It is the effect of the 'new philosophy' on the last of these that is Mr. Willey's theme.

The fundamental, inescapable fact was the actual achievements of the new science, 'the enormous extension of the field of physical or natural causation, the field of efficient causes and matter . . . no event counted for more than the realization that almost all the phenomena of the physical world could be explained by the laws of motion, as movements of matter in space and time' (p. 7). It could not be otherwise for if we start from the Greek

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distinction between ' knowledge ' and ' opinion ' we might contend that ' knowledge ' extends only to what experience forces upon us or what can be deduced by indisputable logic from what experience confirms. Fire does burn, water does drown, the explanation of a phenomenon is true in and so far as it works. This must qualify or limit what Mr. Willey suggests, after Richards: that truth was always the view of things which satisfied the individual in the age in which he lived, that explanation of a phenomenon was a restatement of something—event, theory, doctrine—in terms of the current interests and assumptions. ' This is so if by " truth " we mean what people take for truth. But powerful as beliefs so determined may be, there is no escaping from the palpable facts of experience though we may for a long time and to a surprising extent (witness the Christian-Scientists) disguise them to ourselves. In the end:

Experience like a sea soaks all-effacing in.

Beyond the sphere of experimentally established fact all is in the region of *doxa*, opinion—most of theology, of medicine, of philosophy, of politics, morals, manners—the realm of opinion in which we are apt to use not logic but rhetoric, all the possible means, not so much of ascertaining the truth, as of persuading ourselves and others of the truth of our opinions. ' Great,' as Burke says, ' is the empire of opinion in human nature. I had almost said that the law of opinion was human nature itself. It is, however, the strongest principle in the composition of the frame of the human mind: and more of the happiness and unhappiness of mankind resides in that inward principle than in all external principles put together.'

Yet we must and do strive to give to our opinions the authority of experience. It is not for nothing that Christianity claims to rest on an historical base, the life and death and resurrection, and is always suspicious of attempts of modernists or others to detach it from this rock and give it a purely philosophical character. It is a just instinct that makes the Roman Catholic Church insist on the actuality of miracles, now and throughout the history of the Church—that they did not happen only in some remote past that one may come to think has never been a present. It was not for nothing, as Mr. Willey points out in his specially interesting

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chapters on Glanville, that many serious men clung to belief in witchcraft, for here again, if the facts alleged were proved, was palpable evidence of a spiritual world. 'Atheism is begun in Sadducism: and those that dare not bluntly say, There is no God, content themselves (for a fair step and introduction) to deny that there are spirits and witches' (p. 195). And so with the belief in 'judgements,' the desire to discover the hand of God in earthquakes, storms and historical events. Cromwell discovers it in victories at Tredah and Carlyle has sympathy with him. A severe frost, a poor harvest, was a proof of divine anger. 'No sooner was this fast and humiliation intimate from the pulpits of Edinburgh but it seemèd—and there was no doubt—the Lord was weel pleased; and it was his pleasure to tryst the desire of his people with fair and seasonable weather.' That God did so work, that witches were evidence of a spiritual, if evil, world were doubtless opinions derived from a long tradition and many sources, of which the weightiest was the Bible: 'thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,' the punishment of David for numbering Israel, etc. But the unwillingness of many to surrender such opinions was also an evidence of the desire of the human mind for palpable, experimental evidence.

We live then by opinion, but the facts of experience are ever and again breaking in with disturbing effect on the opinions we cherish, and never did they do so in greater number and with more shattering effect than in the century under consideration. A greater change in human thinking, Professor Stout has said, took place in the later years of the seventeenth century than has ever occurred since men began to think. For, of course, the change was not confined to the sphere of physical science and the facts which it demonstrated. A great deal of erroneous or meaningless speculation was swept away to give place to experimentally demonstrated conclusions. Galileo (p. 17) tells us something ascertained about the movement of bodies. St. Thomas makes statements about the movements of heavenly bodies (p. 21) which, the more one reflects on them, the less intelligible they become. But, and here comes in the implication of Mr. Willey's study, the effect on it of the background to which I have referred in the work of Richards, Ogden, Hulme, the New-Thomists and others, the human mind will never rest content with ascertained facts. It must build

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on it a new fabric of opinion, of opinions which the new facts and methods of inquiry seem to suggest or warrant. So, before the century was far advanced, the philosophers were at work reconstructing the world of opinion in which men were to be called on to live—Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, from whose theories so much was to follow in philosophy Scottish, English and German. But it is all in the region of opinion, an insubstantial pageant capable of dislimning and leaving no rack behind. We are no longer content to regard the movement of the century and that which followed as simply one from error to truth, from the cobweb speculations of the schoolmen to the solidly based conclusions of experimental science. What happened was that a new world of opinion began to displace the old. What gave edge and intensity to the conflict was, of course, that the realm of opinion includes that of faith. Faith is opinion accepted on authority—the authority of the Church or the Bible, or the Koran, etc., or for many people (perhaps the most) the authority of those among whom they have lived—but the same is true of a great deal of what people regard as scientific knowledge. That we most of us accept on the authority of those we regard as scientists—and they, God knows, are only too willing to foist upon us as scientific knowledge what is only the opinion of scientists. When Sir Arthur Keith assures us that at death the life goes out like the flame of a candle he is giving us just his opinion, and we are free to say with Byron:

> we live and die,
> But which is best, *you* know no more than I.

Mr. Willey's book is therefore a sketch, taking individuals to illustrate the varieties of reaction, of the growth throughout the century of the spirit of the *Aufklärung*, but from the point of view of a generation which is no longer disposed to accept 'rationalism' as 'the natural and normal form of human thought wherever it is left free to go its own way, but an historically determined product of definite circumstances and conditions' (Troeltsch). The most interesting chapters to the present writer are not those on the philosophers, but those which deal with authors in whose work the spirit of the new philosophy, the new respect for inductive, experimental science, combines or conflicts with older, religiously sanctioned opinions, the effect of the new spirit on their religious

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and poetic reactions. Bacon is the poet of the new science, of the appeal from authority and tradition to experience, the submission of the mind to the actual teaching of Nature. Mr. Willey makes an interesting comparison of this attitude of submission of the mind to fact as proved by experiment and Wordsworth's belief in a 'wise passivity,' on which Mr. Tillyard has commented so severely in his *Milton*. And perhaps 'passivity' is hardly the term to apply to Bacon's wish for active experiment. It is against the *a priori*, deductive reasoning of the schoolmen that he is arguing. From any conflict between the new science and the orthodox opinions of the age, Bacon escapes by affirming that there are different kinds of truth, that truth is two-fold, truth of science and truth of religion; and in this Mr. Willey agrees with him: 'we need not be denying truth of one kind when we affirm truth of another' (p. 27). The present writer would refer, unless 'truth' is again to mean 'what is taken to be truth,' to say there are different fields of experience, that the sensible experiences with which the scientist deals are not the only experiences. There are experiences of a different kind from which both religion and poetry draw. Bacon's purpose in making the distinction was to 'keep science pure from religion,' a justifiable wish if one reflects how boldly and dogmatically religion had invaded the region of science. But Bacon shows none of the anti-clerical spirit of Hobbes. For him the new vista opened by the experimental method was sufficient to satisfy his intellect and his imagination. The new science was a Pisgah from which he contemplated a new Heaven and new Earth. 'Lord Bacon was a poet,' writes Shelley, 'His language has a sweetness and majestic rhythm which satisfies the sense no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect.' But it is in Sir Thomas Browne, an amateur in science and an eclectic in religion, that one finds the old and the new opinions, not so much harmonized, as permitted to dwell in peace together, the lion to lie down with the lamb. He can, Mr. Willey tells us, live in divided worlds and pass freely from one to the other. He is awake to the importance of the new methods, and bids us study and speculate but 'fly not only on the wings of imagination like the Peripatetics,' but 'join sense unto reason.' But Browne was also a 'grave meditative man,' 'a Christian in the highest sense of the word, broadminded without

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being slack,' the first Englishman to appreciate to the full the poetry of Dante.[1] He was, if not a poet (in Shelley's application of the word) of the level of Bacon, a great prose artist of the kind represented later by Landor, Lamb, De Quincey and Pater. Mr. Willey groups him with the Metaphysicals in virtue of his ' unified sensibility ' (the popular phrase to-day), the way in which his thought is steeped in feeling. He has indeed none of the passionate, tormented thinking of Donne, but he had a taste for dialectic, for joining sense with reason in a scholastic way. In the *Vulgar Errors* he will give you a page of *a priori* reasoning to prove that elephants must have joints before coming to what settles the question that we know by observation that they *have*, an elephant shown in many parts of England ' not only in the posture of standing, but kneeling and lying down ' ; and so with the alleged want of a gall in doves. But it was only for a short time and in an eclectic like Browne that it was possible to hold, and confess to holding, contradictory opinions. If religion were to be vindicated, not so much against scientific discoveries as against the opinions to which such discoveries were giving rise—the new philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes, it could only be done by a fuller study of religious experience, by showing that religion also rested on experience. From the opinion of the materialistic atheist one must appeal to the experience of the saint. This was what in various ways was undertaken by that interesting group of men, the Cambridge Platonists, to whom Mr. Willey devotes the eighth chapter of his book. The movement began, not in opposition to the philosophers at the outset, but from the need to transcend controversy (p. 133), a protest from within the Puritan party against the barren and bitter strife over the dogmas of Predestination, the Fall, Effectual Calling, Imputed Righteousness. The Cambridge group, too, were soon busy building up fabrics of opinion, *i.e.* philosophy, but the best of their work is not to be found in these, but in the sermons of John Smith and Whichcote and Cudworth. Working in the same spirit as Bacon and Descartes, *i.e.* with the same desire to find a basis in experience, they went back to Plato and the Neo-Platonists, as Dean Inge has done in our time with consequences

[1]See Mario Praz's interesting review of Keynes' *Works of Sir Thomas Brown* in *English Studies*, 1929.

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for Christian doctrine, the examination of which will form part of Mr. Bevan's forthcoming Gifford lectures.

To the problem of Scripture for a growingly rationalist age, 'how to fit a supernaturalist and poetic scripture into the new world-scheme, how to reconcile Jehovah with the ontologically-certified Dieu of Descartes, etc.', Mr. Whilley devotes a chapter which links up with a later one on the Heroic Poem, that dream of the Renaissance. What was to be made of a poem which required as an essential ingredient supernatural machinery? This leads to an interesting discussion of Milton's achievement. Milton had dreamed early of a great poem on an historical subject, a poem 'doctrinal to a nation'; but the disillusionment which ensued on the course and failure of the rebellion, for which his hopes had been so high, gave to the poem when it was finally composed a very different tone and character, made of it, and the two poems which followed, a kind of testament to the world in which he uttered his final judgment on the history of Christendom and his arraignment of the weakness, what Mr. Tillyard calls the 'triviality,' of human nature, the incapacity of the mass of mankind for true freedom: 'For instead of fretting with vexation or thinking that you can lay the blame on anyone but yourselves, know that to be free is the same thing as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate, to be just, to be frugal and abstinent, and lastly to be magnanimous and brave; so, to be the opposite of all these is the same as to be slave.' That is the thought which inspired his successive pictures of freedom lost in Adam, of freedom upheld in Christ, and of freedom regained in Samson. Milton as a thinker 'did not belong to the scientific movement of the century' (p. 239) but he was as firm a believer in the authority of reason as Bacon or the Schoolmen. He identified freedom with the service of reason. 'Reason also is choice.'

> Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
> Immediately inordinate desires
> And upstart passions catch the government
> From Reason.

This was the lesson to be set forth by means of a simple Biblical myth, the story of Adam and Eve and the apple, elaborated in a poem of heroic dimensions and characters and incidents and

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descriptions and style. Both Milton's success and his failure are endlessly interesting subjects of consideration. For one must recognize how greatly he did succeed. Despite the disintegration of so much that was essential to the heroic poem of antiquity—the loss of a practicable mythology and the unheroic character of the central incident—Milton wrote a poem which commanded the assent and admiration of nearly two centuries, and is still a store-house of great poetry which it is useless to depreciate except it be by way of protest against conventional, uncritical praise. Christian myth and doctrine have produced only two great, concrete, vivid presentations in poetry—Dante's and Milton's ; and if Milton's is the lesser of the two, it was written in a more difficult age and for a Christianity that had shed much of its gathered mythology, and by a poet whose temper was imperfectly Christian.

It is in his treatment of the Fall that Milton's failure is most obvious (pp. 245-263). How was he to make of the eating of the apple a surrender of reason by a creature in whom ' the whole law of nature was so implanted and innate . . . that he needed no precept to enforce its observance.' There was apparently nothing in his own reason to forbid the act. This, like the law of marriage (that bugbear of Milton's) was a kind of extra, an injunction imposed by God simply as a test of Adam's obedience, though disobedience to it contained in itself all other sins, of which Milton gives, in the *De Doctrina*, a formidable list. ' The real Miltonic Fall, the obscuration of reason and the law of liberty has to be represented as the result of this purely legal transaction ' (p. 251), and Mr. Willey shows well how Milton has entangled himself in two different conceptions of freedom in his endeavour to rationalize the myth—the vacuous freedom of the golden age and the true freedom which consists in knowing good and evil and choosing the good. It was a hopeless undertaking, and yet one feels that Milton might have come nearer to success but for something in him that was the result of a certain innate egotism, a too indulged upbringing, but chiefly of years of controversy leading to civil war and bloodshed. If Milton had had a little more of the mind of a Vaughan or Herbert or John Smith, might he not have veiled the story in more of religious humility and mystery? Might he not have conveyed the impression that if God is Reason and Love the human reason must trust him even when it cannot fathom His

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motives? But Milton's mind had hardened into the temper of the *Aufklärung*. He must understand everything, trust only to ideas that are ' clear and distinct.'

I have left myself but little room to speak of Mr. Willey's main thesis, that the new philosophy necessarily depressed the tone both of religion and poetry. If we mean high poetry in Maeterlinck's sense I think it must be admitted. But there is a great deal of poetry that is not high or metaphysical in this sense but deals with human experience and feeling here and now. Of mediæval poetry how much is the expression of the view of life elaborated in St. Thomas? Dante's. But what of the Provençal lyric, and the romances (leaving out the Grail), and what of Chaucer and Villon? Mr. Chesterton has, I believe, proved to his own satisfaction that Chaucer could not have written as he has but for the security of the faith behind him. Perhaps ; but the impression a less Catholicly-minded reader gets is that Chaucer did not much care for this too daring poetry:

> A thousand tymes have I herd men telle
> That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle,
> And I acorde wel that it ys so ;
> But natheles, yet wot I wel also
> That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree
> That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,
> Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen
> But as he hath herd seyd, or founde it writen,

—so much for Dante. Moreover I cannot but feel that Mr. Willey has too much isolated the philosophical factor. The philosophy was in part a symptom as well as a cause, a symptom, like the poetry, of the disillusionment which then, as in our own day, followed upon a long and bloody war. What turned Pepys's master and others away from religion was the experience of the evils which religion had wrought at home and abroad. What the next century had to endeavour after was some reconciliation of religion and good sense ; and when a deeper religious feeling revived with Wesley religion, as Professor Trevelyan has said, had gone to school to rationalism and learned a deeper regard for humanity, for charitable works as the best fruits of the spirit. And if the eighteenth century produced no great example of religious

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poetry, it did produce some of the best of Christian hymns, which is about all that Christianity had done before Dante appeared. Nor had the religious tradition the worst of the conflict at the end of the century or in that which followed. The Deist movement was a very shallow one. Even Dryden had no difficulty in pointing out the inherent weakness of Natural Religion:

> Vain, wretched Creature, how art thou misled
> To think thy wit these Godlike notions bred, etc.

Poetry and religion have their roots in something deeper than men's opinions, in their experiences intellectual and emotional; and the history of humanity is one of never ending oscillation between interests secular and interests spiritual.

H. J. C. GRIERSON.

LOWES DICKINSON

GOLDSWORTHY LOWES DICKINSON, by E. M. Forster (Arnold, 10/6).

To write the biography of a teacher is not easy; for a teacher, like an actor, leaves little behind him; his life lacks the compulsive thrill of that of the man of action, the nervous excitement to know what happened next, and also the works of the artist, the tangible relics to be reverently examined and compared; what remains are other lives, and a life of Shakespeare by Hamlet would probably not be a good one.

> 'They don't mind dying much in China, do they? shouted Liebling to the Chinaman, hoping to introduce a story he had heard about how one could buy a substitute to be accepted for one. "Always dying" said the Larmah "millions by starvation flood plague at this moment so thick on the ground." That explains why they believe in metamorphosis don't you think said the clever student confidentially to the Larmah. "May be its true for all I know" said the Larmah shaking his hands towards the two remaining sausages reposing on their cold beds of mincemeat, and just for a moment Liebling was quite certain that in the whole world there was only this funny old man

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sitting in front of two cold sausages saying I don't know my dear boy, and feeding the starving.'

Liebling describes perfectly the feeling that any great teacher inspires, but he could not for that very reason have written Lowes Dickinson's biography.

It requires a kind of love which is impossible to define but is easy to recognize when found, and nowhere, I think, is it more obvious and pervading than in this book of Mr. E. M. Forster's.

Of course Mr. Forster has many qualifications, the novelist's, skill in presentation *e.g.*, his arrangement of the letters, verbal sensibility—

> ' But these amenities lay at the edge of his life. Its centre was covered with rubbish and worry. And at its opposite edge lay an imbecile boy whom he sometimes kicked in order to ingratiate himself with his school-fellows ' ;

sense of humour—

> ' Nor was he even insensitive to the joys of Jingoism ; there are some letters to R. C. Trevelyan during the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 which make painful reading for his steadier admirers ; he explains how wonderful it is to see the Empire marching past, and he contemplates bicycling down to Spithead to see the Naval Review. He never reached Spithead. It was too far ' ;

and the necessary detachment—he did not share Dickinson's tastes for Plato, Shelley and Goethe ; and further he has a thorough dislike and distrust for all professional influences:

> ' One hesitates to call him " a popular don," for the words suggest some cheery empty creature.'

But none of these explain his success. Perhaps the secret which he shares with Dickinson and which made them friends is a sense of the mystery of life, a hatred of all tabus and systems which would enforce a proscribed pattern, and a belief that what matters is that each should discover his unique treasure.

For that is the lasting impression which this biography makes: that Lowes Dickinson, every bit as much as Napoleon, was a man of destiny ; he discovered his life and lived it ; and what other

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success is there? Those who do not earn their living with their bodies should not fail to read this book ; it will teach them to avoid their besetting sin, jealousy of the other world.

We do not know enough about either heredity or psychology to know exactly which conditions produce the intelligent and the sensitive: if the causes lie probably in the parental relations, if most intellectuals are psychically bound to their mothers, they are not thereby explained.

The effect on Lowes Dickinson of his mother's death, as described by himself (p. 33), the enhanced feeling for Cambridge, the release from dogmatic religion, is intensely interesting and illuminating, but Mr. Forster wisely abstains from comment.

Whether intellectual curiosity, the wish to understand experience rather than be lived by it, is first caused by emotional frustration, or inability to feel and act as impulse directs, or whether the curiosity causes the isolation, the two are generally found together, and found early in life, and further the combination of intelligence and sensibility with physical grace and skill is rare, *e.g.* Dickinson's typing.

Lowes Dickinson's problem is the problem of everyone who finds himself committed before his choice to a life of understanding.

For such who seems to himself to stand and to be stood outside the world of action and passion with all its powers and awards, there are two temptations, either to take fright and retire into a private world of phantasy, religious or bookish, or denying his gift to adore uncritically blood and action, an invalid poet hoping with an ode to buy the society of an inarticulate boxer.

Except for the unsuccessful bicycle-ride to Spithead, Lowes Dickinson was never guilty of this treason of the clerks ; his danger was the first rather than the second. The interest and example of his life to an outsider lies in his steady progress from himself to others, from a few to many, his persistent testing of ideas by things. It did not come easily to him ; he made all kinds of false starts. Buddhism, Hegel, Medicine, an attempt to combine sensibility and action which was unsuited to him, but once he discovered political history he never looked back. More capable of intimate friendship than most, he came to write

> 'I cannot understand how I thought that this personal passion in transitory individuals could be the key to the universe.'

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The young extension lecturer who

> ' had no notion how to get into touch with ordinary people, and no desire to do so, for I thought I was the bearer of a message which transcended all actual life '

became the Lowes Dickinson of the broadcast talk ; the shy young don, the inspirer and the confidant of perky undergraduates.

People and civilizations are saved by a change of heart ; whether physical violence, loathsome as it is, is necessary to secure it, or whether if we are concerned enough, it can be brought about by ' mental fight ' alone, we cannot answer, but at a time when intellectual is a term of abuse fit only for the Jews, it is particularly important that those capable of waging the latter should not lose patience : to such Lowes Dickinson and also, I think, E. M. Forster, are examples permanent and alert.

W. H. AUDEN.

SHAKESPEARE AND SHAKESPEAREANS

A COMPANION TO SHAKESPEARE STUDIES, edited by H. Granville Barker and G. B. Harrison (C.U.P., 12/6).

ELIZABETHAN ESSAYS, by T. S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, 3/6).

It would be interesting to know what proportion of the adult population of Great Britain, for private pleasure and profit, reads one play of Shakespeare a year. One is, at all events, fairly safe in assuming that it is a very small proportion indeed. Yet the books about Shakespeare go on accumulating in arithmetical progression, one ' problem ' begets another, and there are, we gather, plans for making intensive and highly co-ordinated attacks by trained bands of research workers upon all the problems of palæography, transmission, divided authorship, staging and allusion that remain unsolved. Perhaps it is time to take stock, to suggest a few fundamental questions which, in the busy hum of industry, are not much attended to.

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The occasion is provided by a book written, not for specialist scholars, but for intelligent laymen who want to increase their knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare. *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* contains fifteen essays by different writers, some of them authorities so eminent that it seems an impertinence for anyone lacking a combination of their various talents to criticize the book at all. Yet certain very important things must be said—things which the reviewers, tackling the book with the respectful timidity usual in such cases, forgot to say.

Mr. Eliot is the only contributor to the book to ask, or to imply, the important question, 'Why should we read what has been written about Shakespeare?' And this, of course, in a world of obvious and urgent duties and distractions, involves some further questions: 'Why should we read Shakespeare? Why should we read poetry at all?' If a centralizing conception of poetry and its function is lacking in this book, this is not because it is by fourteen different writers, but because Shakespeare studies, in common with other intellectual pursuits, have suffered from the decay of a unifying tradition—have, in consequence, lost their life in becoming a specialism, or a collection of specialisms, with their own codes and standards. Whilst the tradition was alive, the answers to our questions were implicit within it. Some of the eighteenth century critics are unimportant enough, but almost any paragraph of their work *implies* a social and moral world; and their appeal is to this world, not to 'workers in the same field.'

It was in the nineteenth century that the change took place. (There had been symptoms before then: Steevens, Mr. Isaacs tells us, 'was one of the most learned in Elizabethan matters, an alert, shrewd and skittish scholar, enlivening his later editions with obscene annotations fathered facetiously on two respectable clergymen who had incurred his enmity'—a type that is still with us). That century saw the emergence of the Shakespearean, uncontaminated, as often as not, by any interest outside the Elizabethan field—a phenomenon which Dryden and Johnson—or even Kames and Richardson—would have found it hard to understand. Criticism was not only more and more closely associated with scholarship (which might have been all to the good) but dependent upon and subsidiary to it—a reversal of rôles which is responsible for the dismal spate of academic theses under which we suffer.

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(The thesis, it is worth remarking, is the key to a university teaching post). Shakespeare scholarship progressed by *accumulation* rather than by a process of growth or development from a centre. It became a heavy industry, and to-day it has its monopolies and trusts, its extraordinarily efficient higher personnel, its shock-troopers and its navvies. ' It would seem,' says Mr. Isaacs, ' as though the future of Shakespeare scholarship lies in the organization of new co-operative methods . . . The new objectivity of research to-day is particularly favourable to such methods. By proper allocation and apportionment of tasks between the Shakespeare Association of England, the Shakespeare Association of America, and the German Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, and by organized University seminar work on specific problems, many of the problems at present beyond the individual's capacity could be brought to fruition.' If we find this prospect depressing it is not because we are indifferent to the problems that Mr. Isaacs wants to see solved—questions of authorship, patronage, literary groupings and so on—but because the kind of mind that finds ' the new objectivity of research ' congenial is likely to have a decisive effect upon the future of Shakespeare criticism, and because it is, in general, incapable of finding an answer to the questions that we asked above, or indeed of realizing that they need be asked.

By an answer of course I do not mean a handy formula—a motto for school editions—but an insight, a critical attitude which will permeate and direct every word we write about Shakespeare. It is something that reveals itself in the set of a writer's interests—his points of emphasis—and it can be tested and discussed in particular judgments. The true Shakespeare critic will be concerned to make himself, as far as possible, a contemporary of Shakespeare's—as the editors of the *Companion* point out. But, more important, he will also be concerned to make Shakespeare a contemporary, to see his particular relevance for our time. His essential qualification, then, is a lively interest in the present and the immediate future of poetry, an ability to make first-hand judgments here, coupled, we would add, with an understanding of the extra-literary implications of poetry—its relations to ' the general situation '—*at present*. When this is lacking we can expect nothing but the worn counters that are shuffled in every text-book.

For the scholarship of a Pollard or a Chambers we can only

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feel respect, and gratitude. And a good deal of useful work in the way of historical elucidation can, fortunately, be done by other than first-class critics. But even here we demand that the Shakespeare commentator shall at least be able to recognize critical excellence, that he shall know what the real problems are that need his elucidation. It is therefore significant that in the present volume the chapter on 'Shakespeare the Poet' is both weak and pretentious. Perhaps it is a temperamental difference that makes me find Mr. Rylands' style exasperating:

> 'In *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare seems to gather in all the harvest of his poetic and dramatic experience, to hark back and to adventure farther. He has mastered style, but style has become an exacting and imperious mistress. Yet in *The Tempest* she ceases for a moment to be so whimsical, provocative and outrageous.'

But such loose generalizations have nothing very firm in the way of particular judgments to support them. Mr. Rylands either makes his distinctions in the abstract—where they mean very little—or piles up words and phrases, out of their context and unanalyzed, telling us nothing except that Shakespeare used them. (See, for example, the illustrations on page 99, where he attempts to show that in the later plays Shakespeare 'returns to the old Elizabethan idiom, to the currency and coinage in which Spenser and his fellows had trafficked'). His comparisons are the opposite of illuminating:

> 'In the tragic period . . . Shakespeare's style has affinities with that of Webster and even Sir Thomas Browne . . . "Dark backward and abysm of time" may be *compared* [my italics] with "the Areopagy and dark tribunal of our hearts."'

And

> 'Shakespeare developed from the more elementary sequences of images of his Elizabethan period a far more subtle and profound use of imagery which is very near to that of the great poets of the romantic revival and not unlike the finest conceits of the metaphysicals. From the sweetness of his euphuisms came forth the strength of his metaphors. And metaphor, Aristotle tells us, is the poet's greatest gift, for it implies

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an eye for resemblances. Such an eye or such a wit Lyly possessed.'

We may ignore the apotheosis of Lyly, and it is perhaps over-finicky to ask what is the common distinguishing mark of the imagery of Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge and Wordsworth; but unless there is some occult distinction between 'very near to' and 'not unlike' we are justified in expecting little from the discussion of imagery that follows that amazing comparison.

And failure here means so much more than merely local weakness; it explains the persistent dissatisfaction with which we read. For none of the recognized Shakespeareans—men whose knowledge of the Elizabethan period is vast and enviable—shows any indication that he could deal more successfully than Mr. Rylands with 'Shakespeare the Poet' or that he would find Mr. Rylands' exposition unsatisfactory. Dr. Harrison, looking for contemporary parallels to *The Fairie Queene, Tamburlaine, Hamlet,* Bacon's *Essays* and *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, finds them in Rupert Brooke's Poems, *St. Joan, The Dynasts* and *The Testament of Beauty*. Miss Willcock, who accepts, substantially, my own conclusions concerning the education of Shakespeare's audience, writes an admirable account of Elizabethan English, but when we are expecting the explanation that would throw a stream of light on the relations between language and living she fobs us off with a metaphor: 'Acquisition was now in the air; there was a buccaneering spirit abroad in language as well as on the high seas . . . The nature and quality of this late-Elizabethan achievement cannot be appreciated apart from the whole Tudor evolution in language of which it forms the second great phase. It is the thaw succeeding the frost.' Three sentences on the last page of her essay provide a clue to this sudden slackening of tension. 'While Shakespeare's plays remain the common study of English people,' says Miss Willcock, 'he will, it can be hoped, continue to exercise a centripetal, unifying influence on language. As a "tradition" he will prevent our speech from suffering from a repetition of the mid-Tudor rootlessness. He keeps a certain amount of vivid Elizabethan word and phrase in popular circulation to-day.' This facile observation could not have been written by anyone alive to the present. And a critic who is blind to contemporary rootlessness

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is—need we say?—thereby inhibited from explaining how Elizabethan idiom drew its life from a way of living that has vanished. But in Shakespeare criticism we have become habituated to explanations that do not explain. ' If the Court elevated the drama by its critical or special demands,' writes Professor Sisson, ' the general audience ensured the sturdy health and varied appeal of a drama that was bound to be truly national to satisfy it.' We might believe that ' elevated,' ' health ' and ' national ' were more than uncritical gestures if Dr. Sisson gave any indication that he could handle those terms in relation to contemporary literature and amusements. (Is the *Tatler* more elevated than the *Star*? And what is the health that one finds in our truly national Laurel and Hardy?) But he does not ; and we recall a judgment to which he once committed himself: ' Franchement, même au point de vue strictement artistique, il est possible d'aimer mieux les Tarzan, héros-géants du cinéma, que les personnages anormaux et pervers du théâtre naturaliste des Ibsen et Strindberg.'[1] One does not have to be an admirer of Ibsen and Strindberg to find this artistic point of view incompatible with an interest in Shakespeare that would give life and point to scholarship.

With the exception of that on Marston all the essays in Mr. Eliot's latest volume are reprinted from his *Selected Essays*, and there is no occasion for an extensive review. But the book comes aptly to hand. Mr. Eliot, we once heard it disparagingly remarked, ' is very clever ; he can make a little go a long way.'[2] Exactly ; Mr. Eliot's information does not outstrip his interests. It is unlikely that he could indicate ' the specific contributions ' to Shakespeare studies ' of such men as Aronstein, Bolte, Brotanek, Cohn . . . Sievers, Vietor, Walzel, and Max J. Wolff ' ; his distinction, in this connection, lies merely in the fact that he has given new life to Shakespeare criticism. Shakespeare is the specific

[1] *Le Goût Public et le Théâtre Élizabéthain* (Dijon, 1922), p. 172. All the same the book deserves to be better known.

[2] Substantially Mr. Isaacs' verdict on Johnson, whose contribution to ' accurate scholarship ' has, he tells us, been ' seriously exaggerated by misinformed piety . . . The faults of his edition are atoned for by his magnificent critical preface.'

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subject of only two of the eleven essays before us, but when he writes of Marlowe and Jonson, of Middleton and Massinger, he not only isolates some essential quality of *their* genius, but, by implication or deliberate contrast, throws into relief a fresh aspect of Shakespeare.

The relevance of *Elizabethan Essays* to a lively interest in Shakespeare, compared with the irrelevance of so much that appears in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, cannot be explained merely on the ground that Mr. Eliot is superior as a critic ; most of the essays in the *Companion* do not profess to offer criticism. But Mr. Eliot is so much more successful in his way than the contributors to the *Companion* are in theirs, precisely because he possesses those interests in which we found them deficient. His approach is always the contemporary one. He is well aware of the remoteness of the Elizabethan period, but at the same time he sees his subjects as an *immediate* part of our experience ; as he writes of Jonson, ' We can even apply him, be aware of him as a part of our literary inheritance craving further expression.' A second quality is harder to define. ' Pure criticism ' is nowhere urged and demonstrated more effectively than in *The Sacred Wood*. But the critical rigour, the faculty for isolating, is combined with an ability to see poetry as part of something larger than itself. He writes as a critic not a moralist, but an awareness of a *relation* between poetry and morals, poetry and living, is everywhere implicit. His start is from the careful analysis of particular arrangements of words, but from that he proceeds to problems of personal conduct, as in ' Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca,' to questions of character and temperament, as in the essay on Jonson, to a discussion of the different moral outlook of two periods, as in the brilliant essay on Massinger, which perhaps exemplifies his method at its best. The great poet, he reminds us, is one whose works are ' united by one significant, consistent, and developing personality.' And, ' Every vital development of language is a development of feeling as well.' *Pour distraire les honnêtes gens* was perhaps rather more than a convenient battle-cry ; but it is plain that for Mr. Eliot (he is explicit in the Preface in which the quotation appears) poetry is important because it has something to do with matters that cannot be discussed under the head of aesthetics.'

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I do not mean that Mr. Eliot is the critic described in ideal perfection. He has, it seems to me, an exaggerated respect for some of the minor Elizabethans ; and a weakness for mysterious distinctions—odd in one whose literary conscience is so highly developed—is noticeable in some of the later essays. ' The words in which Middleton expresses his tragedy,' he says of *The Changeling*, ' are as great as the tragedy,' and two pages later ' poetry, dramatic technique ' is opposed to ' the moral essence of tragedy '—blemishes which Mr. Eliot would have been quick to notice in the writings of another. We read of ' poetry . . . in the general atmosphere ' of Marston's tragedies, and there is a curious debility in his account of poetic drama in the same essay. What exactly, we should like to ask, is the ' pattern behind the pattern into which the characters deliberately involve themselves '? It doesn't help to add, as Mr. Eliot does here, ' the kind of pattern which we perceive in our own lives only at rare moments of inattention and detachment, drowsing in sunlight.' From him we are accustomed to something a good deal nearer to precision than that.

But to play the reproving school-mistress to Mr. Eliot is no more part of my purpose than was wanton disparagement of the scholars. I am concerned with one point only—the function of Shakespeare criticism and Shakespeare scholarship. When we consider the part, actual or potential, of Shakespeare in the national life, we think first, I suppose, of the sensitiveness, the emotional development of each reader. But so much more than the individual sensibility is involved. Shakespeare exhibits, concretely, a particular relation between the individual poet and the language, a relation, that is to say, between the finest moments of experience, ' united by one significant, consistent and developing personality,' and a general social-economic situation—something which those who speak glibly of the relationship between ' cultural superstructure ' and ' methods of production ' have not been quick to investigate. Shakespeare criticism (including scholarship) has, then, a double function. It has to make the Shakespeare-experience available to each reader to the fullest possible extent, and it has to relate that experience to the possibilities of living at the present time and, therefore, at the time when Shakespeare wrote. All that does not perform one or other of these functions is lumber, and at a time when it is becoming more and more difficult

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to keep abreast of living issues—to find some answer to the question, How to live—it had better be recognized as such. Shakespeareanism, I would say, is, ultimately, a means of escaping that question and those issues.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

THE TWILIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY, by Rayner Heppenstall (Cape, 5/- net.).

ASPECTS OF LITERATURE, by J. Middleton Murry (Cape, 3/6).

The first of these books traces out and treats as an advance the course of Middleton Murry's work from literary criticism to the exposition of metabiological Marxism and practical work behind the lines of politics. How far this change of work was a personal advance for Mr. Murry is a biographical matter and is not considered in this book. Instead we are given to understand that the course he followed is of general validity and would be an advance for anyone of this generation, in that it means abandoning segregated intellectualism in favour of wider social contacts and greater closeness to 'experiential reality.' Many people would sympathize with the author's dislike of barren intellectualism and parasitical criticism, but he seems at times to deplore the use of intelligence at all and he does definitely condemn literary criticism as a whole.

This is the first point of interest that arises. The argument confines itself to criticism of criticism, points out that 'creative' writing itself involves criticism, and goes on, 'To write criticism of what a man critically writes about poems is therefore to be critical to something like the *n*th degree—in other words, to be at about the *n*th remove from experiential reality . . .' One would think the fallacy here was obvious. It may be just as close to reality to criticize criticism as it is, say, to disagree with someone who gushes over a crude colour scheme or praises an immoral action. Other people's opinions about their 'experiential reality' are of course an important part of our 'experiential reality' (supposing that this fascinating term has any meaning). No one

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wants to deny that criticism of criticism can easily become lifeless, but that isn't because it's got too far away from some original reality, but because, probably, it begins to deal in nebulous generalities or to niggle over worthless details and so becomes an uninteresting bit of reality. Since Murry's literary criticism never was this dead affair I see no reason for rejoicing at his having abandoned it. The re-issue of *Aspects of Literature* (for some time out of print) is a reminder of the excellence of his critical writing and a timely counterblast to the trumpetings of Mr. Heppenstall.

When Mr. Murry gave up literary criticism in favour of systematizing his philosophical and ethical intuitions and finding sanctions for them in Keats, Shakespeare and Blake, he seems to have given up its discipline too. Starting from convulsive convictions (their convulsiveness is recognized in this study) he found support for them where he could—in literature, biology, psychology, philosophy, Christianity, but without accepting the discipline of any one of these. This book traces his progress with enthusiasm. Naturally Murry has found several highly interesting ideas in this wide field, has made them more emotive, and has used them as supports for intuitions which may for some people be illuminating and valuable. No one doubts that he may well have done good to large numbers of people, including himself. But his later work must be of value chiefly to those who have never before realized the possibility in modern life of some of his attitudes and beliefs. For those who have glimpsed them already his thinking is too little disciplined to offer any intellectual support ; and to be reminded of them many sensitive people will prefer to go direct to the poets and religious teachers.

It is, however, precisely as a saviour from the horrors of intellect that Middleton Murry is presented here. ' Murry will stand or fall by the validity of initial acceptances of belief, which, given an originally firm-welded integrity [guaranteed by one's disciples] are unlikely not to be valid, whereas Mr. Eliot will stand or fall by the detailed workings of his intellect.' And later: ' If you have not, [gone through the tremendous struggle of deciding whether to be a genuine Marxian] you are in no place to give an opinion, for the answer to your merely intellectual objections is contained in a whole organic act of which you have no knowledge.' So it is not surprising to hear that ' the philosopher, in established

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senses, is to-day a somewhat irrelevant figure.' However, for those who still like to think they're thinking, there's always this kind of thing: ' . . . all specifically modern awareness and most modern schemes of thought—in a tradition which speciously begins with Spinoza and finally casts off its own heresy in the self betrayal of Hegel—moves [*sic*] constantly to a breaking through of categories, to an affirmation of the continuity of all thought and at last to realization of the unity of thought and action in numerous variants of the marxian Praxis, enriched and made concrete by the implications of bergsonian Intuition and the universality of Jung's Libido.' Selah.

His refusal to tolerate the trammels of thinking makes this writer curiously (for he is a communist) like some of the fascists one meets. Like them too he shows how easily self-importance can feed on the idea of sacrificing self to movement (whether fascist or communist): ' But to the already articulate individual Marxism is also a technique for realizing in him the emergent values of the masses, for giving him a part in their historical function and at the same time making him a more potent instrument for the focusing of their historical will.' Perhaps this explains the self-satisfaction of the book and ought to prepare us for the author's discourteously aggressive manner. Here are his critical remarks on a poem by Stephen Spender: ' Titillation of entrails happily in the sun. The new innocence. Flatulent breezes playing on the tripes' æolian harp. But Narcissus was a pretty lad.' Movements against barren intellectualism should in themselves be healthy, but it seems only too evident that they may encourage the jettisoning of intelligence too and become simply a means by which the slothful can attain to pride and anger without having to discard their sloth.

D. W. HARDING.

MECHANISMS OF MISERY

TENDER IS THE NIGHT, by F. Scott FitzGerald (Chatto and Windus, 7/6 net.).

Many of the features that go to making *The Great Gatsby* as fine as it is are also present in this latest novel of Scott Fitzgerald's. There is still his power of seeming to lose himself in

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incident and letting the theme emerge by itself, there is his sensitiveness (occasionally touching sentimentality) and his awareness of the brutalities in civilized people's behaviour, and there is simultaneously his keen appreciation, not entirely ironic, of the superficies of the same people's lives. This last is the feature that is most nearly lost in the new book. Here there is no more gusto, but right from the start an undercurrent of misery which draws away even the superficial vitality of the Euramerican life he depicts.

The story is the acutely unhappy one of a young psychiatrist, brilliant in every way, who gradually deteriorates. In place of plot there is a fine string of carefully graduated incidents to illustrate the stages of the descent. Rather than tragedy, however, the book appears to me to be one variety of the harrowing, if this can be taken to mean that as we read it our feelings are of misery and protest, and that, unlike tragedy, it can give no satisfactions to those who wish to go on living. On the other hand, it is so effectively and sincerely harrowing that its mechanisms deserve close examination.

In the first place the doomed hero is offered as the most admirable kind of modern man we can reasonably ask for, and throughout the novel he is made to stand out as superior to all the other personæ. This being so we look for some explanation of his collapse, and the first mechanism of misery appears in the ambiguity here. Various possible explanations are hinted at but none is allowed to stand. His wife's wealth, with its heavy burden of smart leisure, Dick deals with like a disciplined artist ; he shows himself heroically adequate to the strain of her recurrent mental trouble ; and he has as full an insight into himself and the strains his work imposes as he has into his patients. Everything that we could hope to do he is shown doing better, and—apparently as a consequence—he cracks up. The gloomy generalization is made by Dick himself in commenting on a man who precedes him to ruin: ' Smart men play close to the line because they have to—some of them can't stand it, so they quit.' But the pessimistic conviction of the book goes deeper than that, and its puritan roots are suggested by Dick's misgivings over his good fortunes and achievements in his heigh-day. He soliloquises: '—And Lucky Dick can't be one of these clever men ; he must be less intact, even faintly destroyed. If life won't do it for him, it's not a

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substitute to get a disease, or a broken heart, or an inferiority complex, though it'd be nice to build out some broken side till it was better than the original structure.' Scott Fitzgerald sees to it that life *will* do it for him.

But in addition to the puritan conviction, there is also present a curious mingling of a childish fantasy with an adult's attempt to correct it, and much of the harrowing effect of the book depends on this. On the one hand, Dick is the tragic fantasy hero who is so great and fine that everyone else expects to go on taking and taking from him and never give back ; and so he gets tired, so tired ; and he breaks under the strain with no one big enough to help him, and it's terribly pathetic and admirable. The vital point of this childish fantasy is that he should remain admirable and (posthumously) win everyone's remorseful respect. But the story is too obviously sentimental in those terms. To try ruthlessly to tear out the sentimentality, Scott Fitzgerald brings in a much more mature bit of knowledge: that people who disintegrate in the adult world don't at all win our respect and can hardly retain even our pity. He gets his intense painfulness by inviting our hearts to go out to the hero of the childish fantasy and then checking them with the embarrassment which everyone nearest him in the story, especially Nicole his wife, feels for the failure.

The question is whether the situation could in fact occur. Not whether the main events could be paralleled in real life, but whether all the elements of action and feeling could co-exist in the way they are presented here, whether we are not being trapped into incompatible attitudes towards the same events. In short, is an emotional trick being played on us?

There seem to me to be several tricks, though without extensive quotation they are hard to demonstrate. Chief among them is the social isolation of the hero, isolation in the sense that no one gives him any help and he has no genuinely reciprocal social relationships ; he remains the tragic child hero whom no one is great enough to help. Even towards the end he is made to seem superior to the others so that they are inhibited from approaching him with help. That this should be so is made plausible by the continual returns of his old self amongst the wreckage, returns of self-discipline and willingness to shoulder responsibility that

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amount almost to alternations of personality. He explains it himself: 'The manner remains intact for some time after the morale cracks.' But it seems highly doubtful whether anyone could remain so formidable spiritually during a process of spiritual disintegration, especially to someone who had been as close to him as Nicole had been. But here another trick appears in the interests of plausibility: the patient-physician relationship between the two of them is now emphasized, and Nicole's abandonment of Dick is interpreted as an emergence from fixation, whereas much of the misery of the collapse springs from its wrecking what has earlier been made to seem a genuine and complete marriage.

Once achieved, Dick's isolation permits of the further device of making his suffering dumb. Reading the aquaplane episode in particular is like watching a rabbit in a trap. The story begins to become less harrowing and more like tragedy when, once or twice, Dick is articulate about himself. This happens momentarily when he comments on the manner remaining intact after the morale has cracked: but no other persona is allowed to be big enough to hear more, and '"Do you practise on the Riviera?" Rosemary demanded hastily.' At one point the cloud of dumb misery lifts again for a moment, when he thinks he is unobserved and Nicole sees from his face that he is going back over his whole story, and actually feels sympathy for him; but this episode only introduces the final harrowing isolation. His position at the end is the apotheosis of the hurt child saying 'Nobody loves me,' but the child's self-pity and reproaches against the grown-ups have largely been rooted out and in their place is a fluctuation between self-disgust and a fatalistic conviction that this is bound to happen to the nicest children.

The difficulty of making a convincing analysis of the painful quality of this novel, and the conviction that it was worth while trying to, are evidence of Scott Fitzgerald's skill and effectiveness. Personal peculiarities may of course make one reader react more intensely than another to a book of this kind, and I am prepared to be told that this attempt at analysis is itself childish—an attempt to assure myself that the magician didn't really cut the lady's head off, did he? I still believe there was a trick in it.

D. W. HARDING.

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A HOPE FOR POETRY, by C. Day Lewis (Basil Blackwell, 6/-).

This book is not what it is stated to be by the author—' an examination of post-war poetry.' That is to say, the poems of the writers in question are not critically weighed, the good is not sifted from the bad, and the quality of their success or failure is not determined. On the contrary, the author starts from the conviction that at least two of his subjects are ' true poets ' and goes on to discuss where the various dodges (assonance, elliptic construction, etc.) to be found in their verse were first used. This involves him in a sketch of literary history since the Romantic movement and an account of the contemporary situation from a political as well as a literary point of view. The information he offers is not (as the author himself admits) new to those already interested in contemporary poetry and familiar with current criticism. The book is aimed deliberately at a different audience.

' Similarly, with post-war verse, the intelligent but untutored reader is apt to admit himself quite baffled at the start: at the same time he is often interested and excited by individual images, and feels that, if only he had one clue, he would be able to make his way quite easily through the labyrinth. The object of this book being largely to persuade the prospective reader, and not to freeze him with assumptions of his mental inadequacy, I hope later to indicate some general clues which may be of assistance. He may feel reassured to know that poets are doing their best now to bridge the gulf from their side, and he does not need to be told that true poetry, however it may appear on the surface, accumulates meaning every time it is read.'

In the effort to bridge this gulf and respect at the same time the level of his audience, the author found himself compelled to write passages like the following:

' Unfortunately, Prufrock, as we have seen, became posh. And this did not do his children any good: and they were irritated at being flattered by their father's virtues, and they did not care for basking in the arc-light of his publicity. There is little wonder that, in consequence, although they retained their respect for him and certain of his characteristics and mannerisms, they began to make up a private language of their own in self-defence, to become hearty, to play practical jokes, to hob-nob with social revolution-

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aries, and in general to assert their individuality. Before long they were highly disconcerted to find that they too had become posh. At this point the joke had clearly gone too far: and we may return to plain speaking.'

And to his credit Mr. Day Lewis shows himself completely aware of the nature of the ' boom ' in his sort of poetry, the collapse of a reading public—in short of the general contemporary plight so painfully familiar to readers of *Scrutiny*. In the face of increasing popularity (it has swept from the Continent to America) he points out the more obvious shortcomings in his own and his colleagues' (in the Trinity) verse.

Granted, then, that he is not primarily addressing a fashionable public and that his audience is at once ' tougher ' and less lettered, of what use are the references to literary sources? For such of these poets who are Communists the only adequate audience is the proletariat to whom at the moment bourgeois literary history is a closed book. As a revolutionary handbook I cannot imagine that *A Hope for Poetry* would have much success. The peculiar problems of the revolutionary poet, for example, the relation of poetry to beliefs, the relation of the 'man ' to the ' poet,' are not, considering the amount of discussion these topics have received in recent years, satisfactorily treated. But that section of the Communist party which is bourgeois in origin and has received only a vague literary training—say, the University level—will find this book extraordinarily sympathetic.

But even these, it seems to me, will derive but little profit from the part of this book which deals with technique. For the very method of the book stands in the way. If technique to be important must be ' a matter of delicate response to inner pressure,' no useful discussion of it can be made out of its context in particular poems. The author, however, again and again seems to imply that the various devices to be found in post-war poetry are not present owing to such pressure but are merely attempts to *freshen up the language*.

' The search for methods for restoring freshness to words contributes to the obscurity of post-war poetry. Poets have gone back to old grammatical usages, and have taken new grammatical licences. We notice, for example, the omission of the relative pronoun and the article, the qualification of nouns by adverbs,

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the transposition of the adjective, inversion, and the frequent employment of elliptic constructions. Where Auden's earlier poems are obscure, it is due much more often to an elliptic use of language than to any confusion of the thought or non-conductivity of the images.'

This view of technique is more clearly defined when it is seen in contrast with poetry which is likened among many other things to a Spirit which descends at rare intervals between which the poet busies himself with internal rhymes and assonances. And 'the fact,' says Mr. Day Lewis, 'of such widespread experimentation is some indication of poetry being in a healthy and hopeful state.' But surely it is in these very visitations that new techniques are forged.

It is perhaps disappointing that the author who is, after all, one of the foremost names in the group, and in a position to give us inside information, should content himself with going over old ground, and ground which critics not so well placed can cover with equal if not more advantage. An account of the development of the movement before and after the 'programme' in *Oxford Poetry* 1927 would have more than a biographical importance. But as it is, whereas undoubtedly the various items are decently but not brilliantly set forth, the precise utility of the display is not so obvious.

H. A. MASON.

MODERN PROSE STYLE, by Bonamy Dobrée (Milford, Clarendon Press, 6/-).

Mr. Dobrée states in his preface that this book 'is meant for anybody who takes lay interest in writing, who might perhaps be helped to understand why he likes some authors better than others; it is in fact meant for those who have never thought much about writing, but like it for its own sake, as well as for what it conveys.' If we do not enquire too closely into the meaning of these last words, the aim may be accepted with interest; Mr. Dobrée is writing for a reader of natural, but untrained, intelligence, who is willing to listen to someone of experience.

However, the rest of the book is completely disappointing, except for the representative range of examples. Here, at least, Mr. Dobrée is thorough, but his comments on the examples

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are misleading and far from helpful. At first, he reads too much into his extracts ; later, he passes from one passage to the next with the shortest and vaguest of comments. His initial assumptions are not promising, as when he says ' And since . . . the essential contact without which we cannot enjoy reading, is a matter of voice, we naturally turn for pleasure to writers of our own day rather than to those of the past, because the voices of one age are, mysteriously, not those of another,' and later states that ' after listening to scraps of Swift, Addison and Defoe . . . we should have to know the authors and the period well to be able to declare with certainty, " Swift," or " Addison," or " Defoe." ' This latter statement may be true, but the assumption that it is easier for the ordinary reader to distinguish between contemporary writers, on stylistic grounds, seems to me entirely unwarranted.

The general nature of Mr. Dobrée's comments is shown in his first comparison of two brief passages by Dean Inge and Mr. Shaw. The first part of this comment is obvious and true—that ' Dean Inge . . . brings out the cant phrase every time ' and ' Mr. Shaw never falls into this ready-made language.' Here is a basis for the whole argument of the book—an opportunity for comments that would be of real value to the type of reader postulated in the preface, in helping him to form his own judgments. But Mr. Dobrée goes on to make pronouncements which cannot really be established on such slight documentation, and, if they could, would be of little use to the beginner. ' Dean Inge, with the suspicion of a pulpit drone, speaks with a level flow, on the slow side (he is a little fatigued we feel), giving a slight air of portentous solemnity by ending the clause or the sentence on a long syllable—damage, state, exist, complete ; he likes the " dying fall." Mr. Shaw, on the other hand, speaks with a lively voice . . . (he) prefers to end the clause or sentence sharply, like a hammer-tap, or rattle—it, liberty, rid.' This type of judgment is in evidence throughout ; attention to the meaning of the words, as illustrations of the thought, is everywhere subjugated to their sound-values and arrangement into patterns. This sort of enquiry is not without its uses, but for the lay-reader, for whom Mr. Dobrée professes to be writing, it is difficult to imagine anything more misleading as a basis for judgments. And when we come to this, on George Moore and Mrs. Woolf, we see how completely the author has forgotten

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his intended audience—' Both writers depend for their effect upon the shape itself of the sentence, upon the inner modulations, and especially upon the play of vowel sounds, yet when you read them you find that you are forming Mrs. Woolf's prose further forward in the mouth, nearer the lips, than Moore's.' Mr. Dobrée's own criteria of excellence in prose do not emerge clearly enough for his comments to have more than momentary interest.

Indeed, the conclusions that Mr. Dobrée reaches on the nature of modern prose are as hazy as his standards of judgment. He believes that ' the written language to-day is much nearer the spoken language ' than in the past. He instances in the seventeenth century, in support of his argument, Milton, Taylor, Browne, and gets over Shakespeare and Nashe by classing their prose as that of the journalists and comic writers who bridged the gap between the spoken and written language. Dryden is conveniently ignored.

The most satisfactory thing about the book is that it illustrates well how far we have got, in considering prose, from the ' purple-patch ' convention. *The London Book of English Prose* was most salutary ; the present book is all the more disappointing by comparison.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

IN ALL COUNTRIES, by John Dos Passos (Constable, 7/6).

This book adds little to our knowledge of Mr. Dos Passos's work, being as it is a collection of his topical papers. It does however suggest that the journalistic instinct, used intelligently, may have a definite and worthy function to fulfil in modern society. Mr. Dos Passos has the true journalist's method of presenting a visit to a country, or an account of that country's recent history, in a series of striking episodes or studies of interesting or amusing characters. But these things are selected on no arbitrary basis of sensationalism ; they are things that to a keen and honest observer reflect, in some way, the conditions of the country. By this vivid mode of presentation, the reader only slightly acquainted with contemporary political problems may be brought to realize their great importance to him, and to enquire into them for himself. There is an immense difference between journalism applied to this

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end, and the usual type which seeks to arouse only fear, jingoism, or mere amusement. There are, I think, many willing to learn to whom a book of this kind might be a serviceable introduction. After all, the problem of arousing interest in any branch of knowledge must be faced and, although Mr. Dos Passos's method is far from perfect, it indicates a useful approach. He should be given credit, too, for his fairness ; his politics are well-known but here there is none of the hysterical narrow-mindedness that mars so many left-wing writers. He can reveal the helpless futility of the first Spanish Republican ' intellectual ' government, driven to reaction in spite of itself, without finding it necessary to stigmatize it as a group of conscious traitors and oppressors. And he is scrupulously honest about his own feelings in Russia.

It is gratifying to find a writer, not degraded by being a journalist, yet remaining an efficient one.

F.C.

LONGINUS AND ENGLISH CRITICISM, by T. R. Henn (C.U.P., 6/-).

Lately I have had the difficult task of buying furniture. Most of the pieces I was shown seemed to me misshapen and ugly. When I protested I was told they were *modern*. Other adjectives were always to hand for anything I found it possible to praise ; and I drew a conclusion that *modern* is reserved, by furniture dealers at any rate, as a term of approval for pieces it is impossible to approve in any other way.

This crude reflection recurred to me when I read Mr. Henn's book, in which the adjective *modern* also appears. ' The purpose of the present essay,' he says, ' is to examine the ideas of Longinus in the light of *modern* critical theory.' ' " For it is not to persuasion but to ecstasy that passages of extraordinary genius carry the hearer." In this sentence rests Longinus' chief claim to *modernity*.' ' From other passages it is abundantly clear that Longinus' test is the *modern* one—the success or failure of the figure.' ' Laws and rules are alike repugnant to *modern* critics.' ' In his treatment of composition his standpoint is extraordinarily *modern*.' And so on. Perhaps after these quotations I shall not sound stupid if I say I was unable to discover from Mr. Henn's book quite what *modern* meant.

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For that reason I thought of the furniture dealers; and reflection persuaded me I was not entirely malicious in doing so. For what meaning can be given to *modern*? 'Anything which appears after a certain date is modern' suggests itself immediately as an answer; but suggests also the difficulty of deciding what date. Geologically speaking, I believe, the Ice Age is modern. In criticism is Aristotle modern? He is many years after the Ice Age; but we usually think of him as the first of Western critics. Are the scholars of the Renaissance modern? Compared with Aristotle no doubt they are; but they too are some centuries old. Is Hegel modern? Is Croce? Is Mr. Richards? Even Mr. Richards's *Principles* appeared some years ago. And towards deciding this question Mr. Henn gives no help, but rather the opposite. Almost all the critics I have mentioned are, I gather, modern to him; at least in some aspect or other. If Aristotle is modern, any critic can be; and the phrase 'modern critic' on Mr. Henn's lips means only a critic of whom he approves.

That, like the furniture dealers, he approves without knowing why should be apparent, I think, on purely *a priori* grounds. For the frequent use—other than demonstrative—of *modern* implies that a slice is being cut off the rod of history. For my present point it does not matter how large or small the slice is; since experience fails to suggest that in any slice, however small, all the happenings have any character in common. Therefore there is no such character as modernity; and when, as he thinks, Mr. Henn is referring to it, he can only be deceiving himself, and referring, if to anything at all, then to something else. Or, if the existence of such a thing as *modernity* be admitted, we can argue in this way. Any slice of history, however small, is so rich in happenings that it is impossible for anyone to give them all attention. When he thinks he is doing so he is in reality attending to a selection from them; and a selection made according to no rule, for the character according to which it is thought to be made is *ex hypothesi* possessed by what is passed over as well as by what is selected. Selection for Mr. Henn being approval, he is on this second count quite like the furniture dealers.

For those who are not impressed by this sort of argument, I may perhaps make one or two further quotations. 'Our successors will account,' says Mr. Henn, 'for the state of post-war

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critical theory. It is interesting to speculate on the documents which will be quoted in evidence ; conjecturally we might suggest Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley, Sinclair Lewis and Dean Inge, D. H. Lawrence and Havelock Ellis as important determinants.' Determinants should determine some one thing ; but I confess I cannot imagine any matter of taste or speculation which these distinguished gentlemen might co-operate to determine. I am equally at a loss that it should be, as Mr. Henn complains it is, ' ironical that we can still talk of universal truth after Eddington or Einstein, Whitehead and McTaggart.' For here it is quite easy for me to imagine interminable disputes between the members of the group. On what principle has Mr. Henn formed it? I can find none that is worthy of the name.

With regard to the slicing of history, experience suggests another thing: that it is an extremely unsatisfactory method of dividing up history for consideration. For the more interesting things are found to run across the slices ; so much so that all who attempt to confine their attention to one slice do not succeed, and must look beyond. This is to the good if they recognize that they are abandoning the notion of slices, and adopt something sounder ; but if not, it can only be very bad. For they are led to claim that all interesting things occur within their slice ; just as Mr. Henn claims that Aristotle and Longinus are modern. Further, as the rule for selection beyond their slice they have only that which served them for selection within ; and we saw that that is no rule. Compare Mr. Henn on Aristotle. ' Philosophy might be defined as the best attitude or set of attitudes which the individual can produce to meet any given situation ; in this corresponding, perhaps, with the Aristotelian *philosophoteron*, the poetry which—as opposed to Plato—was to be " a more philosophical and a higher thing than history." ' The only thing that Mr. Henn has selected for consideration in Aristotle is a term in his vocabulary ; the meaning of the term he has passed over. There is no principle at work here.

I began with furniture dealers because of an annoying personal experience ; but they did not begin the talk about *modernity*. I imagine the journalists did that ; to whom I might first have compared Mr. Henn, since he like them is concerned with authorship. The journalists discover modern successes, praise modern science,

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teach their readers the numerous rites they must observe—a certain shape to the collar, a certain paste in the sandwiches for tea—to maintain a claim to the title *modern*. They do so because not only all they know, but all they inherit of history, is a slice. Having no obligation to the past, they can have no sense of one. Mr. Henn is not without other resemblances to the journalists—the phrase ' and sometimes one grows weary (*or*: doubtful) of it all ' occurs twice within twenty pages ; and constructions are sometimes loose—but this is the most disappointing: that for him too the past is a strange thing. He views it from far off, and like a stranger scans it eagerly for twists and outlines that are familiar. From far off the widest variety of things can seem familiar. Hence the frequency of Mr. Henn's references to the past ; hence too the fact that the greatest compliment he can pay to the past (to do him justice he is not sparing in this) is to call it *modern*.

JAMES SMITH.

A 'SCEPTICAL' PSYCHOLOGIST

RELIGION AND THE SCIENCES OF LIFE, by W. McDougall (Methuen, 8/6).

Prof. McDougall has produced a book of fifteen essays which aim to ' present matter which is likely to be of interest to the general reader ' and to have ' a certain unity of topic and argument ' which is indicated by the title. The essays, with one exception,[1] have been written since his fiftieth birthday and so represent his ' matured convictions.' Prof. McDougall deals with a variety of subjects (' Psychical Research,' ' World Chaos,' ' Eugenics.' ' Nationalism,' ' Our neglect of Psychology '), but definitely links them with the first essay which bears the book title, and so it seems important that we consider not only his opinions upheld in that essay, but also the methods by which he arrived at them. For his views: Briefly he contends that Man ' is an active being with power to direct his strivings towards ideal goals ' which are not ' wholly unattainable.' This view will meet with sympathy, no doubt, from many readers, as also will the further point which he stresses, that he has been led to a position ' more favourable to religion ' than otherwise. More important, in my opinion, is the statement that his views are the result of

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more than forty years study of the sciences of Life: I feel that this will have a powerful effect upon the mind of the general reader. He makes it clear that his 'conclusion has been forced by the pressure of the evidence . . . of cold and sceptical inquiry.' Let us hope that the 'general reader' will be able to read this without his resistance being overcome, for it appears that Prof. McDougall's methods are not as scientific as could be desired.

There are two statements in the first essay which, if considered carefully, should make the reader suspicious. We can agree with him in the first. 'There is nothing more obstructive to the advance of knowledge than a certain unformulated dogma implicitly accepted by many men of science, namely the dogma that what we cannot fully understand, cannot happen. We cannot too strongly insist that the bounds of the possible do not coincide with . . . the limits of our present powers of comprehension' (p. 11). On the next page, in reference to the ability of mathematicians Prof. McDougall says: 'It is inconceivable that this logical power thus mysteriously manifested is the product of the processes of organic evolution . . . It must be that it . . . is intrinsic in the nature of the universe.' Is comment required? Can it be that Prof. McDougall is himself obstructing the advance of knowledge? This is not all, although it is impossible to mention more than a few of the disturbing points in a short review. We are told that 'The great facts of evolution, reproduction, development, heredity, fixity of type, memory, purposive self-direction, learning or profiting by experience, intelligent adaptation, each stands with a great question mark beside it. And to each of these great questions science can return no answer.' This is truly a serious accusation against our biologists and the state of the sciences of Life, but if it is true, is he justified in deducing anything from such negative sciences? Or in using the word science? Perhaps he is, for when we read the statement carefully, it is doubtful whether it has any value. What is the fact of evolution 'with a great question mark beside it'? On the next line it becomes a 'great question.' Then, on page 7, 'the fact of organic evolution is one evidence of the primacy of mind in the universe.' Is the fact of evolution still a great question? Perhaps Prof. McDougall merely wished to impress his 'general reader.' If the 'general reader' dares to read popular works about science, he

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should prepare to be impressed by 'Jargon' . . . Hypnosis follows and the 'truth' will be suggested to him.

Our enthusiasm declines, but we learn early in the essay that 'scientific caution and humility are not enough to lead the way to religion.' 'A certain boldness is required,' and so poetry in the name of Dr. Robert Bridges is invoked!

The two essays following[2] are similar to the first. They amplify parts of it. Very casual reference is made to the writings of Dr. Henderson and Dr. Needham. The 'sceptical' psychologist is able to dismiss *The Sceptical Biologist* and Dr. Henderson in a two-line footnote. He does not think it necessary to make any reference to the last chapter[3] of *The Sceptical Biologist*. Inconsistencies and loose argument are apparent here as in the first essay but the remaining twelve are not so susceptible to Prof. McDougall's methods of reasoning. They are more directly propagandist, but there are still unfortunate relapses. Amongst them is a ridiculously inadequate and faulty analogy of Darwin's Theory in an essay on 'Was Darwin wrong?' It seems inevitable that Darwin should be construed wrongly, he was so careful in everything he said, but it is new to hear that 'natural selection is a secondary feature' of his theory. It naturally follows that Natural Selection can be left out of the analogy with merely this explanation. Again, pleas are made for more extensive Psychical Research: we are informed that the work of one of his colleagues in this field will deal biological materialism its heaviest blow yet. In two essays on this topic we are not given one sign of what the work is. Prof. McDougall devotes a large part of the book to Eugenic propaganda, but he might have acquainted his readers with recent work which shows that a low birthrate, until recently thought to be the stigma of the more intelligent sections of the community, was but heralding in these classes a general decline in birth-rate, already nearly level in all classes in some countries.[4] We feel this has a bearing upon Eugenic Reform.

C. E. LUCAS.

[1] *Family Allowances: A Practicable Eugenic Suggestion* (1906).
[2] *Mechanism, Purpose and the New Freedom: The Apollonian and the Dionysiam Theories of Man.*
[3] *Materialism and Religion.*
[4] There is a very readable account of this in *The Twilight of Parenthood*, by Enid Charles.

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